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Cedar Springs of Inspiration

A publication dedicated to providing ideas, inspiration and resources to use in ministry.

Major June Newbury
Editor, Canada and Bermuda Territory

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NEW YEAR GREETINGS FROM THE WORLD PRESIDENT OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

2007 - Women's Ministries Centenary Year

Dear Sisters in Christ,

It is my privilege to greet you at the beginning of a very significant year for women's ministries in The Salvation Army. One hundred years ago, here in London, England, on Monday 28 January 1907, Mrs Florence Booth met with other Salvationist women in the Cambridge Heath area. William Booth, her father-in-law, felt called to preach to the poor and marginalised but he was very aware that many of their lives were miserable and ignorant. His daughter-in-law, like his daughters, caught the vision and went out to do something for the women of her neighbourhood. This was the beginning of the Home League, a movement for women that now spans the globe and is the means of lifting up thousands of women worldwide. Weekly or monthly meetings bring women together for a programme of **worship, education, fellowship and service** — a good balance of spiritual and practical growth and development. Annual rallies and fundraising efforts are highlights of the year, making women feel that they too can make a difference in the lives of others.



Through the years, two Bible verses have been constant themes: **'She looks well to the ways of her household' (Proverbs 31: 27)** and **'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:15)**. Then, in the year 1999, quietly and without fanfare, Commissioner Kay Rader introduced a new verse into the 'Guidelines for Women's Ministries', looking forward to the new millennium in the year 2000. **Psalms 101:2(b) : 'I will walk in my house with a pure heart'** placed a new emphasis on holiness of heart. Maybe in our busy lives, we need this more than ever before.

The Salvation Army continues to fight evil in many places, including the home. One evil which particularly affects women is that of sex trade trafficking. Not only is this severely damaging to the women victims, it is also damaging to marriage and family life. Pornography — **often accessed in the home** through modern technology - feeds the appetite for sexual variety. Pornography is addictive, so that many men and boys become dissatisfied with wholesome, loving sexuality, seeking excitement elsewhere. The commercial sex industry thrives and The Salvation Army tries to reach out to women who have become victims of this trade. Some of them are held in situations of slavery and coercion.

The year 2007 sees the Army in 111 countries worldwide. The gap between rich and poor is still as wide as ever. The need for women at all levels to be uplifted, empowered and motivated is a continual challenge to our hearts. In some places, the old patterns of work and worship are changing rapidly, and women's ministries as a movement needs to change and re-model. **Let this year be a year of new commitment, new vision and new courage. Let us continue to 'fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith' (Hebrews 12:2).**

With love in Him, prayers for you all and warm greetings for this 'centenary' year,

Helen Clifton
Commissioner
World President of Women's Ministries

**MESSAGE FROM THE TERRITORIAL PRESIDENT
OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES**

Dear Missioners,

Prayer is having something to say with the hopeful certainty that someone is listening. The content of Cedar Springs becomes an ear to our world with insights into God's empowerment.

The theme "Live Strong" is not meant to challenge us to live only by the strength of sheer willpower. For me personally, strength is found in my weakest moments of surrender to a Christ who cares to listen to my inner world. Strength is found in listening out for new directions, methods and holy spirited renewal.



Our brokenness recreated in a vulnerable strength appeals to our seeking world.

As women together we link our weakness to an adventure in Christ-centred connections of new strength.

Plunge into the springs of salvation waters and take another thirsty spirit with you.

Blessings,

M. Christine MacMillan
Commissioner
Territorial President of Women's Ministries

Territorial Project — 2007



In 2007, Women's Ministries will raise funds to support three of the most vulnerable corps and communities in the northern regions of Tanzania.

This integrated project for economic empowerment is designed to help women help their families through literacy, income generating activities, health, nutrition, family planning, HIV/AIDS education, farming techniques etc.

Many of these areas are very dry and women spend an inordinate amount of time simply fetching water from whatever sources they can find. With this comes unsafe water which often causes illness.

Our project will also provide two borehole wells with clean, safe water which can service 500 – 600 families



Seeking the Lost

Michael C. Mack

Sometimes a small group will identify itself by saying: "We're a shepherding group, not an evangelistic group." Is it right to concentrate solely on the needs of a particular group?

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?'

... You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost.

... My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.'
Ezekiel 34:2,4,6

This passage confirmed for me that part of the job of a shepherd is taking care of the flock. But another role is seeking the lost. Shepherding and evangelism are not competing or contrasting values. The good shepherd was extremely evangelistic. Seeking the lost is part of shepherding.

The small-group leader can be an evangelistic shepherd by helping his or her 'flock' search for lost sheep.

➤ **Model concern for the unsaved.** Make friendship evangelism a personal priority~ Eat lunch with unbelieving coworkers. Take on a hobby that puts you in contact with non Christians. Throw a block party for your neighbours. As you develop relationships and start sharing your faith with others, talk about your experiences with your small group.

➤ **Pray for the lost.** In your small-group meetings, make a priority of praying for unsaved friends and neighbours. Ask each person to write the names of unsaved friends on index cards, and pray as a group for those people. Encourage members to take cards home and pray during the week.

➤ **Serve together.** Express God's love to people in your community by serving them as a group. Steve Sjogren's book *Conspiracy of Kindness* and Servant Evangelism's web site (www.kindness.com) has many good ideas.

➤ **Welcome others.** Look for ways to invite unsaved friends to small-group activities. Hold barbecues and other open events where they will feel comfortable.



Acting Out Rhonda Reese

Most of us have encountered opportunities to speak about God's good news to relatives, neighbours, coworkers, and hurting people, but we don't always have the presence of mind to come up with the right words. We end up kicking ourselves for letting an open door slam in our faces because we were unprepared.

A few friends and I began role-playing what we might say in different witnessing situations. We know the Holy Spirit is the one who opens a heart for Christ, but role-playing has helped us be ready when God leads us to speak.

Evangelism role-playing is a great activity for small groups. Here are some scenarios to start with. Divide into groups and start practicing.

- A coworker is dying of cancer. I want to talk to him about eternal life, but I'm not sure how to work it into a conversation.
- We're flying home for Christmas. Our relatives already think we're overzealous cult members. We're paranoid about speaking of our faith.
- A coworker just found out she's pregnant. She is considering an abortion, yet I sense she doesn't really want to do that. A perfect time to show God's love and concern for her.
- A two-year-old boy in our neighbourhood is on life support after falling into his family's pool. I'm going to the hospital to visit this



family. They don't go to church; I'm not sure what their beliefs are about God. I want to offer love and hope.

- My neighbour and I often talk for a few minutes when we get the mail or pick up our newspapers. Lately I've felt this overwhelming desire to speak with him about God. But I'm afraid I might offend him, and he'll want nothing more to do with me.
- I spot a sad-looking elderly gentleman sitting on a bench at the mall. My first impulse is to talk to him about Jesus. But I have no idea how to approach a stranger and start a conversation.

Role-playing with your small-group members will prepare you to give an answer when people ask about the hope in you (see 1 Peter 3:15).

Show an AIDS Patient You Care

AIDS is an indiscriminate killer. It afflicts young and old, rich and poor, white and black, homosexual and heterosexual, Christian and non-Christian. Here are some practical things you can do to show God's love to people with AIDS.

- **Visit them** in the hospital or in their homes by permission. Many people with AIDS have been abandoned by their families and friends, and they're desperate for personal contact. The AIDS virus is transmitted only through a significant exchange of blood or body fluids, so don't let your unfounded fears keep you from touching and hugging people who are aching to feel Christ's love.
- **Love the person,** hate the act. People who contracted AIDS through abusive behaviour will expect you to blame and judge them. Sur-

prise them with concern and compassion.

- **Form a group** to help with meals or home maintenance. As AIDS progresses, the victim's strength diminishes. A hot meal or help with the housework can visibly express the love of God.
- **Assist financially.** Most AIDS victims soon grow too sick to work, if they don't lose their jobs before then. That means dwindling incomes and mounting medical bills. Any financial help Christians can provide will go a long way.
- **Pray with them.** Your prayers will encourage and comfort those with AIDS. They can also provide tangible physical and emotional help for AIDS sufferers.

Coupons for the Sick

Call a meeting for those willing to give a few hours each month to help friends and neighbours who are sick. Ask people to bring crayons, coloured pens, scissors, and tape. Then brainstorm a list of things each person wishes someone would do for them when sickness strikes.

Volunteers make up 12 coupons apiece, one for each month of the year on poster paper, describing a specific service they would like to perform. They include their name and phone number on each coupon.

The coupons are collected and arranged in packets of 12. The packets are kept in the church office. As seriously ill people call, a packet is delivered to them. The volunteers do

not find the unexpected phone calls from those who are ill burdensome because the services are varied and infrequent.

How can you adapt this idea in your church, small group, or among like-minded friends and neighbours? Here are some coupon ideas to get you started:

- walk the dog
- take the kids to sports practice
- deliver groceries and meals
- launder and iron clothes
- mow the lawn
- clean the house
- prepare a meal
- write notes/letters
- water house plants



Six Ways to *Serve Your Community*

Project warmth

Collect blankets, coats, and other warm clothing for the homeless. One group advertises their annual "blanket run" in the church newsletter and receives several truckloads of donated items. They also approach area businesses for monetary donations to buy rain ponchos and socks (the most requested items). Deliver your bounty to local homeless shelters and soup kitchens for distribution.

Graffiti be gone

Gather buckets, scrub brushes, sandpaper, hoses, and so on and throw a graffiti clean-up party. Concentrate on a single area and you can achieve tangible results in one day.

Urban garden

Help urban dwellers turn an abandoned city lot into a garden by providing seeds, tools, and muscle. Begin by checking with City Hall in case special permits are required. Then set a time to plant the garden, alongside other neighbourhood residents. As you tend the garden all summer, relationships will grow along with the plants.

Prettify a park

Is there a neglected park in your neighbourhood?

Get permission from the appropriate local agency, then roll up your sleeves. You'll need trash bags, work gloves, brooms, and gardening implements. Bring large pieces of screen to sift broken glass, gum, and dangerous objects from sandboxes. You may also need tools for repairing fences. Paint hopscotch and four square courts on the asphalt. Ask local businesses to donate fresh sand or tree bark.

Expect plenty of onlookers

Perhaps you could invite the curious to a cook-out at the park to celebrate its restoration.

Treating without the tricks

Instead of collecting treats at Halloween, distribute them. One small-group dressed in amusing (but non-scary) costumes and distributed sweets at a children's hospital (check with the hospital first). One group was able to pray with some of the children's parents, providing hope and encouragement.

Gleanings

Farms and orchards in your area may allow you to collect leftover fruit and vegetables for distribution to food ministries. Groups who've done this are often amazed at the amount of food they can collect in a day.

What about Panhandlers?

Give to the one who asks you, Jesus said, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you Mt. 5:42.

What does this mean for Christians walking the streets of any modern city? How should we respond when we encounter panhandlers asking if we can spare any change?

Consider some of the following ideas.

- The best thing people can do is to stop and talk to a homeless person, said the late homeless advocate Mitch Snyder. It doesn't cost a thing. The Salvation Army for more than a century, has ministered to the homeless, showing civility and dignity. It helps to combat depression, and paranoia that many homeless people face.
- Know where to refer people for help. Know locations of Salvation Army shelters as well as social agencies in your city. Make sure people know where they can turn for help beyond spare change.
- If the person is hungry, buy him or her lunch. If you have time and the person is willing, take him or her along to share a meal.
- Carry gift certificates for local restaurants and fast-food places, and share these. Some missions and social agencies offer tickets that you can give people on the street. They can then exchange these tickets for hot meals, beds, and assorted services.
- The National Coalition for the Homeless Canada is an excellent source of information on this subject.

Rabbi Charles A. Kraloff's book *54 Ways You Can Help the Homeless* is full of wonderful ideas and advice. The entire book is available on-line at www.earthsystems.org/ways/.

Secret Service

Inspired by Matthew 6:3, one church group makes secret deliveries of groceries, flowers, notes, and other niceties to unsuspecting recipients. With each delivery we leave a card illustrated with the outline of a hand; our group's pseudonym, The Right Hand and a verse that would best minister to that person's situation. Remember, "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand



know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret" (see Matthew 6:3-4).

We sometimes leave the gifts on the doorstep and then run off, like kids playing a prank. Other times, we have the goods delivered by a third party to the person's home or office. Whatever method we use, we always enjoy the opportunity to "Proclaim in humility the wonders He has done" and be a blessing for others.

Help and Hope For Young Moms

Each year in North America one million women between the ages of 15-19 become pregnant. What a perfect time for the Church to reach out and help a woman in distress.

Volunteering

A church can launch a community help centre for pregnant mothers helping out financially and with volunteers who could initially help the young mom-to-be get connected with the centre. Having volunteers to love and accept these young women could make all the difference in the world, providing an atmosphere of love and acceptance within a worship setting. For example a one hour service on Sunday morning could be arranged, followed up during the week by a discipleship program.

Biblically-based parenting classes

Set aside an evening to hold classes for expectant mothers and fathers to learn about such things as meal planning, hold craft class, classes for newborn care and Bible studies. After participants complete all three phases over 12 weeks, hold a graduation with cake and punch. Give each participant a bathtub filled with new baby items or a car seat in recognition of a perfect attendance.



Baby showers

Encourage groups in the congregations to help young mothers by giving baby showers. Invite other congregations in the community to participate. Each supporting church has a contact person responsible for organizing a baby shower within her church, choose a date for the shower, then determine a drop-off point and sets up a crib or playpen to receive donations.

Financial support

To raise support for the centre, promote fundraisers, welcome speakers to talk about the sanctity of human life. A budget is set up to support young women, through pregnancy tests, a 24-hour hotline, pregnancy counseling, abstinence education and post-abortion healing counseling.

Financial support for these programs is important since most pregnancy centres don't receive federal funding.

The Love of Knowledge

Nancy Cooper, USA Western Territory

This could be an afternoon outreach program

Introduction

It seems that many children today are raising themselves. They sit in front of electronic entertainment devices for hours at a time. They lack supervision and interaction with other people.

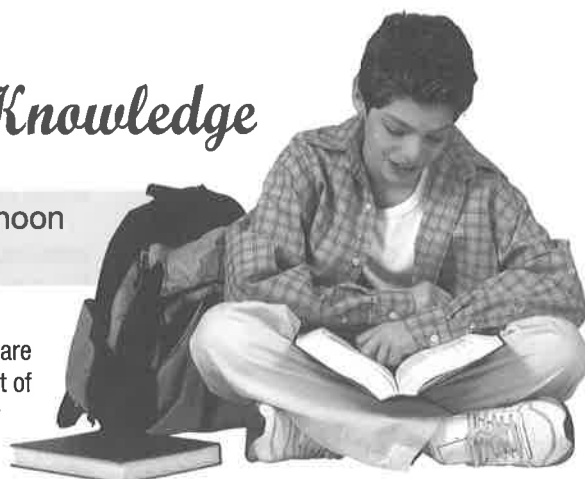
They are not developing communication skills, comprehension skills or a sense of imagination. They have no confidence, and record numbers are failing in school. Many see suicide as the only way out. We need to find ways to create in them a hunger to learn; to ask questions; to notice the world around them; to interact with others; to treat others with dignity and respect; and to expect it in return.

When we started youth programs at our Church, we noticed that many of the children were struggling in school. They had difficulty reading. We started holding weekly phonics classes. Six games are used to teach important rules in English.

We play games once a month — Scrabble®, Boggle® and other word games. Bible reading has also been incorporated into our program by helping the children

understand and sound out the larger words in the Bible that they can't understand. The children also learn the books of the Bible by the same method.

Then we saw a need for the children to develop math skills, and so this element has been added by playing number Scrabble® and Yahtzee®. Some of the children had never



played a game before and got so excited they didn't want to stop or go home. They felt successful. Those with learning disabilities did just as well as the others. Many families have been brought into the corps through these programs.

Program Idea

Have the women participate in learning games or phonics lessons so that they can understand this program.

Service Projects

After School Program

Sponsor a youth program to assist children with basic skills — reading, math, spelling by playing games. Have the women volunteer their time to be a part of this program.



Church Library

It doesn't have to cost much to put together a church library. Make flyers advertising this project and the need for books. Have the women and children pass them out at the corps, in the neighbourhood and at their school. Yard sales and thrift shops are good places to pick up inexpensive books. Have the women sort through the books, discarding any that are not suitable. Set up a method of keeping track of the books that are borrowed

are borrowed and recruit volunteers to man the library during the time it's open.

A Story Hour

Members of the women's ministries can volunteer to read to the children during a story hour. They could also help them practice reading out loud.

Sponsor a Read-a-thon

The object of this event is for the women to read non-stop and get sponsors to pay an agreed upon amount for each hour they



participate. Once you've set a date and the guidelines, develop a flyer explaining when the event will take place and the project the money will go towards. Allow space on the flyer for name, address and telephone number of those individuals who agree to sponsor the women.

Sponsor a Learning Fair

This event features learning centres where the women will teach an activity that they are proficient in - knitting, sewing, crafts, gardening, painting. Recruit other volunteers to assist in the learning centre. The class could be repeated several times during the fair.

Adopt a Child

Match up the women who wish to participate in this program with children in your Sunday school or youth programs. They are to mentor

and encourage their adopted children through phone calls, letters of encouragement and by remembering birthdays, holidays and other special events.

Investing in the Future

The story is told about a man who was seen on the beach throwing sand dollars back into the ocean. They were stacked three feet high, as far as the eye could see. Another man walking along the same beach saw the man busily throwing the sand dollars back into the ocean and said, Why bother, you can't make a difference? There are too many. The man simply picked up another sand dollar and threw it into the ocean and said: It made a difference to that one. That's what we need to do. Save one child at a time.

You can make a difference in the lives of children. They learn by watching. If they see you handling problems wisely and calmly without judging, it can influence how they handle the difficult situations they face. Showing children how to fix problems by finding solutions and answers, one step at a time, is a valuable lesson that many children often miss in just struggling to survive. If we help, children can learn the skills they need to succeed and to be strong and confident people.

God spoke to the children of Israel, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up (Deut. 6:4-7). As the Lord spoke to the Israelites, so He speaks to us today, telling us to teach the children about Him. When we invest in a child, we invest in the future.

Ways to Encourage the Elderly

Encouraging ways a small group can reach out in the Church/Community to the Elderly



- **A Church Chronicle.** Gather from several long-time church members their recollections of the church's ministry, momentous events shaping its history, and significant people God used. Compile their anecdotes in a journal and place it in the Church History Book for the Library.
- **Bible Reading.** For many elderly people, failing eyesight may now inhibit Bible reading. Read Scripture aloud to them. Offer to pray with them about what God is teaching them from His Word. Secure tape recorders and tapes of Scripture.
- **Game Night.** Enlist your small groups in hosting a game night for older people. Set up board games at several tables, then let the play begin.
- **Garden Bounty.** The miracle of life brings great hope to the elderly. Plant a garden in a spot where they can monitor progress regularly, their back yard, in a window box at a level they can care for without bending over. When the vegetables reach maturity, they'll provide the added benefit of delicious nourishment.
- **Carolling Plus.** Many groups think of singing Christmas carols to shut-ins during the holiday season. Add a special twist by bringing along a baby or a gentle pet. The elderly will delight in someone or something to hold.
- **Home Improvement.** If you have the requisite skills, assist the elderly with plumbing, wiring, or carpentry on their homes. Even those who are all thumbs can serve by shovelling snow, raking leaves, washing windows, moving furniture, or cleaning the house.
- **Tax Time.** Increasingly complex tax codes can frustrate the elderly. If you have skills and knowledge in this area, offer a free or inexpensive tax preparation service.
- **Field Trips.** Arrange with a convalescence home's director to take mobile patients to the zoo, mall, and church. All you need is a friendly spirit and the ability to push a wheelchair.
- **Meals on Wheels.** If your community has a Meals on Wheels program, call and find out how you can help.
- **Happy Birthday.** Do you know an elderly person whose family lives far away? Throw them a surprise birthday party, complete with cake, party hats, and cards. Take a phone card so they can call their family.

Sustaining The Widow

by June Newbury, Toronto, Ontario

Grief is a part of life. For those who are grieving, the darkness of those early days can be unbearable. It's through the kindness of others that a glimmer of hope can be experienced. Reaching out to the widow in tangible ways is an opportunity for ministry. Here are some practical guidelines.

Practical Support

- **Provide meals to the home.** *In the early days there are so many things to think about. Not having to worry about meals is a great gift.*
- **Transportation for extended family if arriving for the funeral is a great challenge.** *Help to arrange trips to the airport or the use of a vehicle while in town*
- **Help do yard work.** *Keeping up with mowing the lawn is the last thing on the widow's mind*
- **Housework can be an overwhelming task in these early days.** *Ask if you can help with specific tasks (i.e. clean bathrooms, do laundry, wash windows etc.)*
- **Offer child care if appropriate.** *A grieving spouse and the children may both need a break.*
- **Offer to run errands.** *The mundane tasks can be overwhelming and it would be a great help to have someone pick up the dry cleaning.*
- **Invite anyone who may be grieving to sit with you at the meal or at church.** *Suddenly being alone in these situations is a reminder of the loss experienced.*

Emotional Support

- **Respect the space of the widow.** *She may*

"The Lord watches over... and sustains the fatherless and the widow"
Psalm 146:9



not be ready to be socially active and may say "NO" to your invitation.

- **Reach out to the children regardless of age.** *If the widow has young adult children, take them for coffee.*
- **Respect the details of the grief.** *Grieving is a very personal and private matter. The grieving loved one will share when they want to do so.*
- **Be cautious about what you say.** *Do not use clichés or tell the grieving person that they will be over their loved one soon. These comments can be hurtful.*
- **Don't ignore the grieving person because you are uncomfortable or don't know what to say.** *There are no right words, but knowing you care is always right.*
- **LISTEN!** *Allow the widow the opportunity to express how she feels and what she is thinking. This will help in the grieving process.*
- **Pray for the grieving.** *They are facing new challenges every day in the midst of loneliness. Knowing that they are held before God in prayer is a great comfort.*

Movie Lovers' Morning

Anne Lane, Australia Southern Territory

Our Women's Ministries Coordinator came to us last year with the idea of running a women's "Movie Lovers' Morning". The idea for this group was as an outreach to women, but also for the women of our church to connect with women in the community. Our coordinator wanted this to be a connector group where women from Play Group, the Thrift Store and Emergency Relief could join with women from our church in a non-threatening environment, where they could not only watch a movie, but have a cup of tea and a chat. Quite often, women that come through our doors cannot afford to go to the movies. This gives them the opportunity to see a movie at no cost. The movies are either on DVD or video and mostly new releases.

We show the movie through the multi-media system on the big screen. Tea, coffee and popcorn are always available throughout the movie. If children come along, we have a play area set up in the foyer where the moms can see them, a supervisor is present to care for them. However, we encourage the kids to feel free to roam around quietly or to sit with their mom. We believe it is important that the mother doesn't feel that her child is a distraction, also we want the child to feel comfortable in the church environment.



At the end of the movie, our coordinator will encourage a short discussion so that the women can talk about their emotions and thoughts that come from the movie. We have a devotional reading that relates to the theme of the movie and conclude with prayer.

One difficulty is trying to find a movie with suitable language and of reputable content. The movie needs to be viewed carefully by the leader beforehand.

This ministry is held once a month and is easy to organize and a great way to bring women of all ages together. Our coordinator sends out a flyer each month to those involved and has some available to give out to people we may see throughout the week. The flyer advertises the movie to be screened that month, also location, dates and times.

Originating from a passionate interest our coordinator has in movies, the idea was directed into a new ministry for our church, which is reaching out to those who wouldn't normally attend church. Relationships are building among the ladies, which is great, and of course they hear about God in the process. It's friendship evangelism at work. Give it a go! We Did!

Stone Soup and Scripture

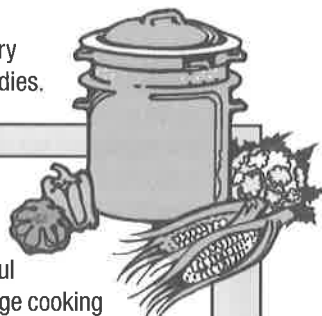
by June Newbury, Toronto, Ontario

Use this idea as an outreach to ladies. Encourage the ladies to invite a friend and arrive with their favorite ingredient for soup. It's best if they indicate what ingredient they are bringing beforehand so you have a variety. As they arrive, add each ingredient to a pot of soup stock.

While the soup is cooking, prepare several word games or activities on fellowship.

ENJOY THE SOUP WITH FRESH BREAD

Share the the story below with the ladies.



Once upon a time, a stranger came into a town.

The people of the town were distrustful of strangers, so no one offered him food or a place to stay. So the resourceful stranger made a fire in the middle of town, and took out a large cooking pot that he filled with water. He then placed a rounded stone about the size of his hand in the bottom of the pot and began to cook it.

The children of the town were curious. "What are you doing?" They asked.

"Why I am making stone soup," the man replied. "You are all welcome to have some."

"Stone Soup!" the children cried. "You can't make soup with just a stone!"

"Why yes you can," the man replied. "Stone soup is a fit meal for any traveler, but if I had a few potatoes, then it would be fit to serve the mayor of a town such as this. 'I have a potato' one boy said. He left and returned with three potatoes. Another came back with carrots, another with spices, another with turnip and another with meat.

The stranger cut the potatoes, other vegetables and meat up into small chunks.

The stranger put each of these into his pot and added the spices and soon a crowd formed around him. They had all heard the story of a man who could make soup from a stone. "Ah! This will make a fine soup," the stranger said.

After a while he said that the soup was ready, and he shared it with the townspeople who all agreed that stone soup was truly fit for a king.



Working together, we can make something from nothing.

Devotional can be a reflection on this story and what it means to your group of ladies within your community. Use 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27. Keep it light.

Cures for Humdrum Prayer Times

Behind most people's frustration with group prayer is a lack of variety. Week after week, it's the same. "Let's go around the room and share requests.... Okay, let's pray now." And back around the room you go again. Resolve not to use the same prayer method twice in a row, then try the following ideas to bring freshness to group prayer:

- After one person shares her requests, *ask the person on her right* to pray briefly for her. Move through the group this way. After everyone's requests have been brought before the Lord, close with five or ten minutes of sentence prayers that focus on praise and worship.
- Devote all but the last five minutes of your prayer time to *praise, thanksgiving*, and *talking* to God about the Bible study you just did. During the last five minutes, let group members pair up, share a prayer request, and briefly pray for each other.
- Share *answers* to prayer. Whenever answers come, stop right then and give God thanks. Answered prayer and verbalized gratefulness bring energy and enthusiasm to our prayer lives.
- Vary your prayer posture. Kneel, stand in a circle and hold hands, raise hands in praise, and so on.
- Let *music* enhance your times of worship. There are many worship choruses that can "get you in the mood" for expressing adoration and praise. One group leader used music to lead her group through several prayer transitions. One worship song led the group into adoration, another set the stage for several minutes of silent confession, another led into thanksgiving, and a fourth chorus prepared the group for bringing their requests before God.
- Schedule *extended* times for prayer. Meet for bagels and coffee on a Saturday morning, then spend an hour or two in group prayer. If your busy schedules make it difficult to get together outside of your regular meeting time, devote every fourth (or sixth) meeting to prayer.
- Keep a *prayer file* with ideas for varying group prayer.
- Set *guidelines for sharing* requests. You may need to limit each person to two minutes. Some groups limit prayer requests to those involving group members or their immediate family. Another excellent guideline is to prohibit problem-solving.



Six Ways to Pray with a Group

Alphabet

Call out a letter of the alphabet. As people in the group think of an attribute or aspect of God's nature beginning with that letter, have them say the word or phrase and then briefly praise God for that character quality. For example, if you say "T" a group member might respond with "Trustworthy: Lord, thank You

with a person to talk to this week. For a list of the names of God *try your church library or a local book store.*

Sign-In Prayer Requests

If your time is limited a sign-in system can help the group spend less time explaining prayer needs and more time praying. As the

ladies arrive have a sheet of paper ready for everyone to write down their requests. Read each item aloud and ask someone to pray about it.

Prayer Shuffle

A variation on the sign-in sheet is to have members note requests on index cards. If you have many needs to pray for, divide

into groups of three. Shuffle the cards and hand out a few to each group.

Global Perspective

Invite a missionary family to your group meeting to share their slides or a video. Lead the group in praying for the specific needs they mention during their presentation. If no missionaries are available, create awareness of world needs through video.

Community Concerns

Clip articles from your newspaper about local issues or people who have specific needs. Use the clippings as a basis for intercession.



that I can trust you." Another says, "Tenderness: God, I praise You for Your tender loving care." To keep things moving, the leader mentions another letter frequently.

Name Above All Names

Compile a list of the different forms of the name *Jehovah* and what they mean. Hand out copies to the group and ask them to spend a few minutes meditating on the names. Invite each member to share a name that is particularly meaningful to him or her and to turn it into a short prayer. The person praying might say, "Father, You are Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord who provides." Thank You for providing me

The Wheel Illustration

Adapted from Growing Strong in God's Family (Nav Press)

Dawson Trotman, founder of The Navigators, loved using concrete objects to illustrate spiritual principles. One such illustration has become known as **The Wheel** and depicts the Christ-centered life of a follower of Jesus. It is an excellent tool for ensuring that you and those you are helping are moving toward a balanced and vital life with the Lord.

Let's walk through each component of The Wheel, beginning at the center with the hub.

Christ the Centre

The hub of The Wheel is Jesus Christ. As the writer explained it, "If you mean business for God, then the centre of your life must be Jesus. From this hub comes your driving power, your guiding power, and your holding POWER.. From Him comes our life, our power to be victorious, and our all-sufficiency."

The act of making Christ central in your life, that is, giving Him the place of true leadership, is an act of your Will. There should be a rim in your life when you are willing to surrender totally to Christ's authority and lordship.

As you explain the hub to the person you're mentoring, look up and discuss together 2 Cor. 5:17 and Galatians 2:20. These verses describe a life with Christ at the centre.

Obedience to Christ

The rim of The Wheel is also part of our re-

sponse to Christ. It represents our obedience to Him. When you are obedient to Christ and actively following God's leading, it shows in your outward life. People can see the evidences of your faith. The proof of your love for God is your obedience to Him. In fact, none of the spokes of the wheel will hold together unless they are rimmed by this essential element of obedience.

Romans 12:1 and John 14:21 speak to this critical dimension of the Christian life.



The Word

The spoke representing the Word of God is the foundational spoke. In practice, this spoke is perhaps the most crucial element in a balanced Christian life. As God speaks to you through the Scriptures, you can see His principles for life and ministry, learn how to obey, and see Christ as worthy of your

unqualified allegiance. When a Christian has a vital personal intake of the Word of God, he is healthy and growing.

If you are helping a new Christian, you can use Joshua 1:8 and 2 Timothy 3:16 to drive home the importance of a strong Word spoke.

Prayer

The other vertical spoke — also representing how we relate to God — is prayer. Prayer should be the natural overflow of meaningful time in the Scriptures. The two go hand in hand. Respond back to God in prayer after He speaks to you through His Word. In this manner, you share your heart with the one who longs for your companionship.



Prayer is how the power of God is unleashed. Personal battles and battles for others are won in prayer, and the cause of Christ is thus furthered. Show the person you are mentoring the importance of prayer through verses such as John 15:7 and Phil. 4:6-7.

Fellowship

We now turn to the horizontal elements of The

Wheel, representing how we relate with one another. The first horizontal spoke is labeled fellowship.

There is a certain chemistry that takes place as Christians get together to build each other up. This cannot be accomplished if you operate independently and are isolated from other Christians.

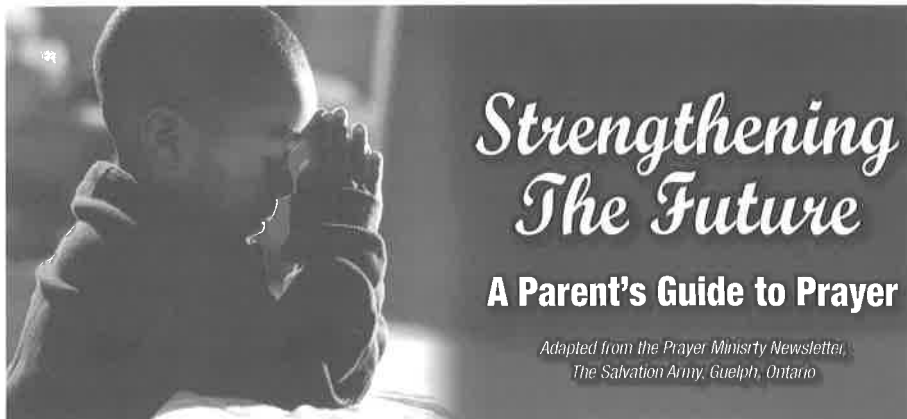
To help someone you are mentoring grasp how God feels about His children seeking fellowship with each other. Discuss Hebrews 10:24-25 and 1 John 1:3.

Witnessing

The final component of The Wheel is the witnessing spoke. The natural overflow of a rich and vibrant life in Christ should be sharing with others how they, too, can have this life. Point a new believer to verses such as Matthew 4:19 and Romans 1:16, so they will see that talking about their faith is an essential part of their new life in Christ.

Using The Wheel

The Navigators have developed a Bible study and Scripture memory system to help you or someone you are mentoring to absorb and apply the principles of The Wheel. The second Bible study book of the "Design for Discipleship Series," called The Spirit-filled Christian, contains a Bible study for each element of The Wheel. Series A of the "Topical Memory System" includes each of the verses mentioned above, along with instructions for how to memorize them effectively. These materials are published by NavPress and are available through Christian bookstores.



Some good ideas for parents, grandparents and Sunday school teachers to help children learning how to pray.

Make a list of prayer partners

One of the best gifts a parent can give a child is a Christian support group. List the phone numbers of three adults and two children. Have your child pray with each person once a week for at least a month. If you cannot think of adults you trust, ask your pastor/minister for help. Praying with others will become a habit and develop relationships between child and adult at the same time.

Help children sense their importance

Jesus drew all people to Himself. There is nothing that will make a child feel more special than to know that they are important to God. Jesus modeled for us the place and importance of children within His Kingdom. Rejoicing with a child when they have accepted Jesus into their hearts is a wonderful way of helping them feel important. A personal note of encouragement to a child reminding them of how special they are within the family of

God and that you are praying for them goes a long way. Conclude your note by writing out a prayer expressing how important their talents are to God and to others. This prayer can be used each night before bedtime.

Make prayer emotional

Fear, anger and loneliness are among the emotions that cause millions of children to give in to temptation. Scripture states that

Trust that
God will be
faithful in
helping them
understand
His Word.

we are to pray before we fall into temptation, which means praying about our emotions. Prayer is especially critical for children of divorce. An 82 year-old man, said his father had abandoned him and his mother in an unheated shack in the middle of the winter. And said he felt cold all his life, the cold of being abandoned by a parent. The only thing that

would warm his heart was the first words of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father" which he changed to "My Father."

Pray about Scripture

Prayer and Scripture cannot be separated. You cannot understand Scripture without praying for God's help and you cannot pray rightly

without Scripture. A good way for a child to understand this is to choose a Scripture and pray about it seven days in a row. Trust that God will be faithful in helping them understand His Word.



ask who they would like to pray for and we can pray with them

Pray in the morning

David did. If he had not he would not have known what God wanted him to do that day. By the time a child is eight-10 years old, evening prayers are no longer enough. They need to know that God would much rather guide than forgive. He would rather talk with us early in the morning, before we are tempted, before we get hurt, before we sin.

Prayers of repentance

Before insisting your child repent, stop and ask yourself if it was God or you who was offended. Millions of children have been

driven from the Church by parents who used God as a lever to get their way. Still, prayers of repentance must be taught. They are like brushing your teeth—spiritual hygiene that cannot be missed. Each night for a week ask each child if they can think of anything that they should take to God for forgiveness and cleansing. Then, if there is a need, ask your child to forgive you. Your humility could give them the courage needed to go to God.

Pray about your doubt

It is good for children to be able to talk about their Sunday school lessons, but it is not enough. Our real job is to help them drag their doubts out into the open and take them before God and to pray over them until they have been replaced with real faith. Even when a child has no real doubt, asking questions often leads to a deeper, more lasting conviction than providing the answers to them.

Pray for others

The first word of the Lord's Prayer is "Our," not "my." Praying for others is very important, but it cannot be forced. Children's hearts are their own. We can ask who they would like to pray for and we can pray with them, but telling a child who to pray for can easily lead to empty prayer — worse than no prayer at all.

Don't give up

Focusing on each of these ideas for a month at a time is a great start, but don't stop there. Build yourself a family altar, a table with an open Bible. Put this article in your Bible. When you have followed these suggestions, obtain a book on prayer. Share what you learn with your children. They will become the salt of the earth, strong and filled with the joy of being alive. They will be the leaders of the church and the world.

Leadership Qualities

Adapted from: "Spiritual Leadership"

by J. Oswald Sanders

Questions that can help you become a better Leader



Spiritual leadership is a blending of natural and spiritual qualities. Even the natural qualities are not self-produced but God-given, and therefore reach their highest effectiveness when employed in the service of God and for His glory.

Personality is a prime factor in natural leadership. The spiritual leader, however, influences others not by the power of his own personality alone but by that personality illuminated and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

There is no such thing as a self-made spiritual leader. Nevertheless, because qualities of natural leadership are by no means unimportant in spiritual leadership, there is value in seeking to discover leadership potential both in oneself and in others. Most people have hidden and undeveloped traits that may long remain undiscovered. An objective study of the following suggested standards of self-measurement could result in the discovery of such qualities where they exist.

- Do you retain control of yourself when things go wrong and remain calm in crisis and resilient in adversity and disappointment?
- Do you think independently yet listen to the thoughts of others?
- Can you handle criticism objectively and remain unmoved by it?
- Can you use disappointments creatively?
- Do you readily secure the cooperation and win the respect and confidence of others?
- Do you possess the ability to secure discipline without having to resort to a show of authority?
- Are you a peacemaker? It is much easier to keep the peace than to make peace where it has been shattered.
- Are you entrusted with the handling of difficult and delicate situations?
- Can you accept opposition to your viewpoint or decision without considering it a personal affront and reacting accordingly?
- Do you find it easy to make and keep friends?
- Are you unduly dependent on the praise or approval of others?
- Are you at ease in the presence of your superiors or strangers?
- Do your subordinates appear at ease in your presence?
- Are you really interested in people? In people of all types and all races?
- Do you possess tact and anticipate the likely effect of a statement before you make it?
- Do you possess a strong and steady approach to decisions?
- Do you nurse resentments, or do you readily forgive injuries done to you?
- Are you reasonably optimistic?
- Do you welcome responsibility?
- Do you intentionally develop yourself spiritually, through prayer, bible study, accountability and worship?

Spiritual Spring Cleaning

What am I grumbling about?

Do everything without complaining or arguing. Phil. 2: 14

Do I have habits that irritate others?

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Ro. 15:1

Do I justify certain indulgences?

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. Luke 8: 14



Am I too busy to read God's Word daily?

I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word. My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises. Ps. 119:147-148



Have I wrongly offended someone?

But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. ... First go and be reconciled to your brother. (Mt. 5:22-24)

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Phil.4:2

What am I selfish about?

Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. I Cor. 10:24

Does my conversation always honor God?

The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom,

and his tongue speaks what is just. Ps.37:30 Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. 1 Pet. 2:21-22

Do my media choices always honor God?

I will walk in my house with blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile thing. Psalm 101:2-3 Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. Phil. 4:8



Do I procrastinate?

Be strong and courageous. And do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. 1 Chron. 28: 20

In what area am I most undisciplined?

Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so it will be even more fruitful. Jn. 15:2



The Gift Nobody Wants

Major Libbet Booth, U.K. Territory

Suitable for those facing physical challenges or personal losses in their lives.

THE OLDER WE GROW THE MORE WE EXPERIENCE LOSS. In fact, one writer has stated that we start suffering loss the moment we leave the womb for the world. Now there's a cheerful thought!

Suffering

Lately I have suffered much personal loss — of independence, health, mobility and self-worth — through no fault of my own. This has lead to three years of questioning, grieving, anger and, at times, despair. However, it has not all been negative. I have had time to look at my faith and test it out, and can say now with utter sincerity that, *I know whom I have believed ...* Another important truth I have internalized is that it isn't the circumstances of life that matter, but what you make of them. I know that many of you will have gone through loss of one kind or another, and I hope some of the thoughts which helped me and which I share, will find an echo in your hearts.

For the Lord is watching his children, listening to their prayers (1 Peter 3:12. Living Bible.)

Thought from the Past

Give me an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out (Thomas Aquinas, 1127-1274)

Thoughts from the Present

C.S. Lewis called suffering *God's megaphone*. Author Phillip Yancey calls it *the gift nobody wants*. The poet Byron called it *the path to*

truth. There are definite lessons that can only be learned along this path.

The tension that pain and suffering brings is that which exists between acceptance and resistance, and it is a conflict that has to be resolved if I am to live triumphantly. As a Christian, I often meet conflict on the path of spiritual growth. I find it to be something of a dichotomy when I set the trust that God is a loving Father against what life is actually unfolding for me.



Thought for the Future

Together express/list the loss experiences of life and, beside them, write the positives that can come from them. Reflect on the lessons that God is teaching through these losses.

Hope

Even when we are too weak to have any faith left He remains faithful to us (2 Timothy 2:13, Living Bible)

... We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character,

hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given. (Romans 5:3-5, New International Version)

Thought from the Past

Without God: not a single step. With Him: to the ends of the earth. (David Livingstone, 1813-1873)

Thoughts from the Present

We can rebound against wind and weather, calamity and tragedy, disease and death, as long as we have hope. We can live weeks without food, days without water, and even several minutes without air, but take away our hope and, with only a few seconds, we toss in the towel! Knowing that is true about His creation, God calls hope the anchor of the soul, the irreplaceable, irreducible source of determination.

Hope is the opposite of despair. When you accept the fact that sometimes seasons are dry and times are hard and that God is in control of both, you will discover a sense of divine refuge, because the hope then is in God and not in yourself. (Chuck Swindoll)

Trouble starts when I focus on stressful, hopeless moments:

- When God allows something I was certain He would not allow.
- When I expected God to say yes and he said no or not now.

The problem is that I am focusing on what is lost rather than what is left. I often mistakenly think I have lost everything, or

am going to lose everything, when it simply isn't true.

Thoughts for the Future:

Share the traces of God's hand that remind you that you can trust the heart of God by completing the following sentences:

- I have seen God's hand when ...
- I have seen God's hand through ...
- I know that God has been with me because...

Peace

If we go through hard times with Him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with Him! (Romans 8:17, The Message)

Thought from the Past

Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself (Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1882-1945).

Thought from the Present

Peace does not dwell in outward things, but in the heart prepared to wait trustfully and quietly on Him who has all things safely in His hands". Elisabeth Elliott

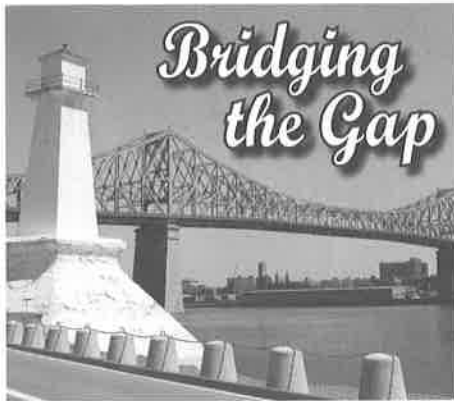
Read: Song 752 SASB — *Peace Perfect Peace*



Thought for the Future:

Reflect on the each verse of Song 752 as it relates to your personal circumstance. Ask the Lord to speak His peace into your area of concern.

Pray as a group specifically for the areas in your life where peace is lacking.



Preparation

Try to procure a model or a large picture of a bridge to display. Use this fellowship evening to build new bridges in relationships at the same time encourage ladies to cherish existing relationships.

Special Feature

Invite a youth to be the soloist for the evening. This will bridge the gap between adults and young people.

Introduction

A bridge is a structure providing continuous passage over a body of water, roadway or valley, for man, vehicles, pipelines, etc. Bridges can bring together two masses of land, to unite them as one so that there is no division and no reason for man not to cross over. A simple bridge is a log spanning a narrow stretch of water.

Quiz

Ask the ladies to list as many bridges as possible, award a prize to the person with the most examples.

Pontoon	Overpass	Flyover
Aqueduct	Cantilever Bridge	Boardwalk
Viaduct	Suspension Bridge	Drawbridge
Footbridge	Trestle Bridge	Causeway
Rope Bridge	Fly Bridge	

Using material from reference books, briefly discuss the following famous bridges. Perhaps some of your ladies will have visited, walked on, driven over even climbed over (Sydney Harbour Bridge) — they may come up with names of famous bridges in other parts of the world.

- Sydney Harbour Bridge
- Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco
- London Bridge – U.K.
- Brooklyn Bridge, New York
- Bridge on the River Kwai

Quiz: Building Bridges of Knowledge

- What famous bridge has a nursery rhyme written about it? (*London Bridge*)
- What kind of bridge pays for itself? (*Toll Bridge*)
- Which bridge in San Francisco is noted for many suicides each year? (*Golden Gate Bridge*)
- Many people have driven over this bridge on their honeymoon! (*Rainbow Bridge at Niagara Falls*)
- In which part of human anatomy is there a bridge? (*Nose*)
- Which musical instrument family has a bridge? (*Stringed Instruments*)

Devotional

Plan a devotion around the theme, using examples from scenes of everyday life — how Jesus bridges the gap between sinful man and God.

- Bridging relationships
- Building and mending personal bridges
- Seeking, asking for forgiveness
- Bridging the old with the new-life:
2 Corinthians 5:17

Suggested closing song

993 SASB *How Great Thou Art*

Conclude the evening with refreshments with the ladies building bridges with each other.



Preparation

Ask members the previous week to bring something of special meaning that they have on the wall at home, and be willing to talk about it, where it comes from, why it is important to them.

Quiz — pre-plan

Number and display press pictures or advertisements, having first removed all identification. Provide pen and paper and invite members to identify the pictures. If preferred, simply hold the pictures up and have the answer called out.

Discussion

Discuss various kinds of picture-making:

- Painting.
- Photography and how it has progressed.
- Floral pictures. The ultimate in this type

of picture has to be the young man who a few years back, with an army of volunteers, set out a floral picture the size of a field! They planted millions of bedding plants and made a remarkable copy of Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers'. The designer was taken up in a helicopter to view his masterpiece, and TV cameras gave the viewing public a glimpse.

Scripture Reading

Luke 10:25-37 (or any of the parables of Jesus)
The converse of our theme is true of Jesus. For him every story painted a picture. Read the Good Samaritan or other chosen Scripture.

Through 'painting' these pictures, Jesus enabled people to see a portrait of themselves. Can you see where you fit into the picture? Are you satisfied with what you see? Through the words of Jesus countless people have come to really know themselves, and have allowed him to refashion their lives.



Candle of the Lord

- Borrow as many different candles as you can and have them displayed on a table in the centre of the room with a large white candle in the middle on a stand to make it clear that this is the *Christ candle*. Prepare cards with the words of the chorus *Candle of the Lord*.
- Play the tape *Candle of the Lord* and suggest that women listen to the first verse, and during first chorus and succeeding verses, quietly approach the table one by one and choose a candle that they feel closely resembles themselves, then take it, with a card, back to her seat and reflect on the choice she has made.
- Re-wind tape and as tape rewinds, have each woman share (at level of comfort, or pass if she prefers) why she has chosen her candle. You might like to lead by saying why you have made your choice, if there is a lull.
- When women have shared, pick up on the words *how bright the light is from soul to soul* in verse 2, and say that you are going to play the song again, and that you will turn out the lights in the room. As the song is played again, light the Christ candle, and then your candle from the Christ candle. Then light the candle of the woman on your right with words of affirmation such as *love is more powerful than sword*. Tell the women to relax and let the Spirit give them words of affirmation as the flame is slowly passed from candle to candle until all candles are lit.
- When the tape ends, or when all candles are lit if the lighting takes longer than the tape, invite the women to read the words on the card in unison.

Fellowship Breakfast

**"They devoted themselves
...to the fellowship, to the
breaking of bread and to prayer."**

ACTS 2:42

Preparing breakfast for family or eating alone can be a challenge. Ladies are sure to enjoy a "Fellowship Breakfast" away from home after a busy week, preparing school lunches and other family commitments.

Fellowship Breakfast

Plan a breakfast at a nearby restaurant, this will ensure that no one is responsible for preparation or clean up.

Duration of Fellowship

8:00 am -10:00 am leaving plenty of time for Saturday chores and errands.

Possible Activities

- Have each person write a practical household tip on an index card, then share among the group.
- Scrap booking tips. Share how they can create family memories without great expense.

Special Feature (where possible)

Have a guest come and share about an issue, a devotional and/or a Bible Study, a solo would also add to the morning.

Plan a breakfast to coincide with special times of the year such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter have a guest come and share an idea for the occasion.

Christmas

Creative gift wrapping ideas for the family can

add fun to your Christmas morning. Share gift ideas that are practical and inexpensive. Encourage the women to shop around in order to stretch the dollar.

Thanksgiving

People often intend to send thank you cards to those who have been helpful in their lives, but so often fail to follow through. Bring 'Thank You Cards' have the ladies write a card to someone in their life who has made an impact on who they are. Bring a supply of stamps that they can buy. To ensure they are mailed one of the group could be responsible for mailing them on the way home.

Easter

How to make the most of a family meal at Easter. Arrange a family pot luck where everyone shares in the meal preparation. Set up a display of the cross, crown of thorns, nails, centred around an Easter lily. This display will spark discussions of the events of Easter and the hope that believers have in Christ, also an opportunity to share Christ with family members who may not know the full meaning of Easter.

For a more serious approach to a discussion of Easter. Consider the experience of each person who stood at the cross when Jesus was crucified. Copy out the words to "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" and reflect on each verse as a group. This can be a great way of sharing a meaningful Easter meal with family.

Starting a Saturday with a great "breakfast with a purpose" will give the ladies a boost to get those Saturday tasks accomplished.

June Newbury, Toronto, Ontario



What's in the Bag?

Competition

One point for the first person who comes to the leader with the correct article, choose items ladies will be familiar with, for example:

- Pencil or pen
- Package of mints
- Children's toy
- Glasses
- Bible
- Diary (current year)
- Driver's license
- Credit cards (Visa/Mastercard)
- Photo of grandchildren
- Receipt from grocery store
- Telephone bill
- Shopping list
- Lipstick
- Hand cream
- Cheque/Bank book
- Library card
- Pocket calculator

Encourage the ladies to be creative with their choice of handbags/purse just for this evening. A large purse, a small purse, colors dark and light. Make sure they choose the style that they like. As the evening unfolds you'll be sure to find out what's in each bag.

Introduction

Hold up diagram ... bags under the eyes.

- Who remembers her first handbag?
- What was your most memorable hand-bag? What did it look like?
- What did you use it for?
- Does anyone have any fashion rules about handbags? e.g. size, colour, style etc.

Memory game

What was in my handbag when I was

- Young and single
- University/College Student
- A young Mom
- Business woman
- Retired person

How has the content of your handbag changed over the years?

Bible Bags

There are many kinds of bags that we use in all ages and stages of our lives. What kind can you think of? diaper; plastic; paper; overnight; evening; bank; tote; shoulder, Bible etc. Let's look at some Bible bags.

Bag of stone: Faith (1 Samuel 17:40)

Here we have the story of David going into battle with Goliath, and all he had was his slingshot and a bag of stones. King Saul offered the shepherd boy David, his armour, but David couldn't even walk around in it, let alone fight while he was wearing it. I cannot go in these,' David said to Saul, 'because I am not used to them.' So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them

in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

These stones were ordinary river stones, which had been worn smooth by the tumbling water. They were not special in any way, or of any real value, it would seem. They could not be sold for food, clothing or weapons, but what value they held for the safety of the nation. They were stones of faith. David knew that with God at his side he could save the Jewish nation from the Philistines and destruction. He had faith, and demonstrated it.

Bag of holes. (Haggai 1: 5-6)

The prophet Haggai is bringing the people a challenge about their priorities. The people had been brought back from exile and had begun building a new temple, they had been focused on other things and their priorities had changed. 'Now this is what the Lord Almighty says, "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat but never satisfied. You drink, but always thirsty. You put on clothes but can never get warm. You earn wages only to put them in a purse with holes in it".

Have you ever tried putting something into a bag with holes in it? Try putting water into a bag full of holes. If you have ever tried to re-use a plastic bag from the supermarket to find that it was one from the fruit and veggie section and had holes in it, how useless and what a mess.

Have you ever lost money only to discover that there was a hole in your wallet, what do you do? Either mend it or toss it away and

buy another one. There are similarities here, in that we start out doing all that we can for God but then other things distract us and our focus gets sidetracked. We have good intentions but fail to achieve what we set out to do.

Bag which does not wear out? (Luke 12: 33-34)

'Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' This is the bag we would all like to have. How can we obtain it? Let us look at some of the ways. If we fill a bag with all the things that we treasure they will only fade and pass away, things like possessions, knowledge, people and so on. If we will fill the bag with heavenly things, the things of God, we will have them forever, what an exciting and

comforting proposition, how can we refuse? Jesus warned the people listening to him, that where your heart is, your treasure is also. Earthly treasures are only for a short time, but heavenly treasures are forever, so let's make sure we fill our bags with the right treasures.

Conclude the evening with:

Favorite song or invite a soloist to participate.

Refreshments

Hand out treasure bags to the ladies as they go home.

Adapted from "The Islander" — New Zealand Territory for Cedar Springs





Name of Group	LIFT (Ladies in Fellowship Together). Send an invitation to representatives of every denomination in the community explaining to them your idea. Mail out to every home in the community a flyer advertising your intent by inviting women to come for an evening of relaxation with no obligation to attend every month (come when they can).
Type of Group	Coffee and dessert, relaxation
Aim of Group	For women of all ages and religions to come together for fun and fellowship
Target Group	Young working adults
Main focus of Group	Fellowship/Outreach
Secondary Focus	To encourage women to support each other and to promote independent businesses
Duration of Program	7:30 – 9:30 p.m. Stay within the two hour time frame, working ladies don't want to be out late. Choose whatever day of the week works best for your community – e.g. the first Monday or Tuesday of every month from October to May.
Outline of Program	Attached
Cost for Participants	\$5.00
Leadership	Committee
Support Personnel	Committee - representation from each denomination.

Equipment

LCD unit, PowerPoint,
overhead projector

Resources

Research at craft fairs, business cards and personal
contacts, people to come and do demonstrations.

**Possible related
Activities**

This is my story, Music, Hostess gifts, Give-a-ways
The special feature list is endless:

- Chocolate making
- Cake decorating
- Gardening
- Christmas decorating
- Fashion shows
- Quilting
- Health products
- Massage therapist
- Foot care
- Soap making
- Photography
- Woodcrafts
- Scrapbooking
- Home parties - Partylite,
Pampered Chef, Jewellery,
- Home and garden etc.



Look for entrepreneurs so as to promote their business. THE SKY
IS THE LIMIT

This is my story - Look for people who probably have had a
rough time in life and how they survived and coped with each
situation e.g. physical and sexual abuse, cancer, MS, adoption,
and the list goes on. Have someone do a short devotion to tie in
with the theme, keeping in mind that all denominations are rep-
resented.

Music – Have a variety e.g. solos, duets, school choir, community
choir, instrumental (brass, jazz, piano, guitar group), etc. Try to
involve children and teenagers as well.

Anticipated Results

To make people aware of what is available to them in their
own community. To promote businesses of local people.
Goal is to encourage everyone to enjoy good fellowship in
a warm Christian environment.

Resting In My Circumstance

Adapted for Cedar Springs
by June Newbury

A fellowship evening

Take on... a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside (Ephesians 4: 24, *The Message*).

The challenges of life can make us weary. Learning to rest in the midst of our circumstance is vital to our spiritual well-being. We need rest just as we need air, water and food to survive. As we rest, we open our hearts to the ministry of the Holy Spirit as He tills the soil of our souls so that we can bear fruit – no matter what our circumstance.

GARDENS CAN BE A PLACE OF REST

There are four things needed for most plants to grow:

Soil Seed Sunlight Water

- Prepare short talks on the need for the above, remembering what lack/excess of them can do.
- Provide seeds/bulbs to plant in pots as a reminder of the spiritual truths found in the garden.
- Share spiritual experiences which reveal how beauty has come from seeming desolation in your lives.

He rides at ease whom the grace of God carries (Thomas a Kempis 1379-1471)

Rest is essential, not only of the body, but also of the mind and soul. Rest and healing go hand in hand.

Make copies of song : 647 SASB When shall



I come unto the healing waters? (read or sing the song together).

I have always loved the visuals that this poem paints for me. When I need rest, I love to wander through a beautiful garden. It provides music for the soul. In a mature garden, where fullness of growth and newness of growth come together in harmony, I never cease to wonder at the triumph revealed!

In the good times I praise God for the loveliness of his creation. In the bad times, I am learning to see that, with time beauty can cover so much that is stark and jarring. The garden has taught me that God sees and deals with loss in a very different way than I do and his way is always better. The question is, am I willing to allow my soul to be a garden for the Lord I adore?

*And now, God, do it again –
Bring rains to our drought-stricken lives
So those who planted their crops in despair
Will shout hurrahs at the harvest,
So those who went off with heavy hearts
Will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing.*

(An extract from Psalm 126, *the Message*)

Your Favourite Season

Adapted from UK Territory

Great idea for a coffee and dessert evening in a home setting, or at your Church. If setting up at the Church choose four areas or rooms appropriate for the size of your group.

Preparation:

Choose four rooms and create a display in each to reflect one of the seasons of the year — spring, summer, autumn, and winter. As the ladies arrive, invite them to peruse each of the rooms to get the ladies thinking about each season.

Introduction:

We identify the seasons by weather. See how many words we use E.G. cloud, rain, storm, fog, puddles, drizzle, sunshine, snow ice, icicle, blizzard, hail, wind. Allow time for ladies to share. We all experience the sunshine of life which we celebrate but there are times when we are in the midst of life's storms and the season feels most heavy. Experiencing God's hand in every season is vital.

Participation:

Invite members to go to the room with the season that most reflects their personality and where they are in their lives today. Have one of the ladies to guide this time of sharing. Ask members which is their favorite season of the year and why? Give each group time to share why they chose this season. Ask members if they can recall ... seasonal

traditions, bonfire night, serenading, pancake Tuesdays, polar bear swims, October fest and more. Think of some of the unique traditions within your province and reflect on them.



Thought:

All seasons contribute to the growth of a crop. All experiences contribute to the growth of a life.

Scripture

Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (read this passage of scripture together in their groups.)

People's moods can often change just like the seasons of the year. One moment you can be cool and breezy, carefree and relaxed just like spring and summer; then you can be cold and bitter, sullen or depressed just like autumn and winter.

Thankfully God accepts each of us just as we are, whatever our frame of mind or change of mood, and will help us get through the cold and lonely times. Just like the changing of the seasons, you can guarantee that God will always change our winters unto spring.

Reflect on how you have weathered the seasons of your life and claim the promise from Zephaniah 3:17. The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.

The Relatives are Coming

Living out
connection
instead of conflict
this Christmas

Many of us have spouses, children, or extended family who are a challenge to spend time with, especially during the holidays. Families want holidays to be special. It can become a battleground. Create an atmosphere that lowers the risk of this holiday being ruined by one or more of the high maintenance people in the family network.



Sometimes in families relatives have to contend with one person with untreated alcoholism, another who is in denial about the mental and emotional illness that rules her life, and another who is basically a hostile scrooge. In addition, there could be an assortment of non-believers who tolerate a small amount of Christian traditions.

A few tried and true tips for the holidays:

Offer Options. Have a plan for the moments that are most special for you, and your immediate family. Drop your expectations and offer options so people can join in, as they desire.

List A Rough Schedule In Your Invitation.

By hosting, you gain control over the most important part of the holiday. Choose what traditions will be private and what traditions you will offer to others. For example, in some families children give gifts to Jesus and surprise the family by revealing what they did. Maybe this could be done with just your immediate family. Around our holiday table, we all get the option of reading a piece of the Christmas story (on slips of paper that have been prepared ahead of time) and we light candles in the advent wreath.

If you are dealing with severe dysfunction (like a child abuser in the family), don't feel

obligated to invite that person into your home when children are present. Perhaps you can create an adults only part of the gathering, or if other people in your family are hosting a holiday and this person is coming, don't feel obligated to stay and place your children at risk. Come, deliver hugs and gifts, then go. Have a plan ahead of time. Decide as a couple to give the same reply no matter who asks.



**Just as you get your home ready,
get your heart ready**

Bag Up Your Bitterness. Just as you get your home ready, get your heart ready. You may have been hurt by others. Make sure *you* aren't the one who ruins Christmas. Don't react or lash out if you have unresolved issues. In Pam Farrell's book *Love Honour and Forgive*, There are *Six Statements of Forgiveness* that will help anyone drop the backpack of bitterness. You don't forgive because the other person deserves it; none of us really deserves forgiveness. We forgive because forgiveness is healthy. That's why God recommends it seventy times seven.

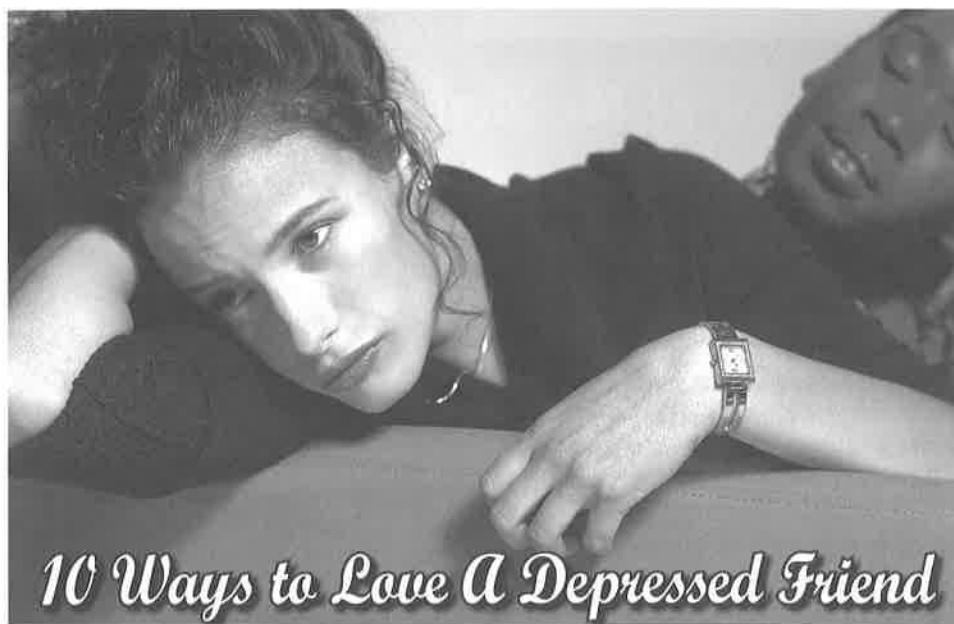
Layer In Love. Love is a decision. It gives even if it is not acknowledged or appreciated or reciprocated. It is lavish love that keeps on loving no matter what. We have to release our unrealistic expectations and accept people as they are: dysfunctional, selfish, and sinful.

Bring a Blessing. Write a blessing for someone who has hurt you deeply and read it to them privately at Christmas. Pray a blessing over the guest. Everyone loves to be encouraged. A good idea would be to create an angel ornament for the children. Beforehand ask parents for a photo of their child and make it the angels

face. (Tell a story about the angel and the punch line can be ... *and the angel was you!*) Invite the family to gather and list each child's character qualities and strengths and write them on the back of the ornament. It is an inexpensive activity that each of the children will remember with fondness. Even if you do this kind of activity just for the children, it is an unspoken reminder to the adults to focus on every person's positives. Think about each person in your family. Can you create a poem, a symbolic gift, or write a card so that they feel the love of God through you this holiday? Give and expect nothing so if they have any positive response, then that is icing on the cake!

This will make a Christmas that everyone will long remember to be full of fond memories instead of conflict.

*Adapted for Cedar Springs by Linda Bradbury,
USA Southern Territory*



10 Ways to Love A Depressed Friend

A person who is depressed has difficulty sensing God's presence. A listening friend can be a tangible evidence of the presence of the Comforter. Here are some things you can do as a caring friend.

- 1. Encourage them to talk and cry if they are ready to do so.** Verbalizing helps to organize thoughts and put them into perspective.
- 2. Be a good listener.** Wait to speak until they have finished talking, then tell them simply that you care and provide a comfortable silence if they need it.
- 3. Give answers sparingly.** The depressed person often lacks the ability to absorb or act on good advice. Well-intentioned counsel can be twisted into an insult by the confused mind.
- 4. Pray daily for God's plan to be played out.** God knows, and He is in control.
- 5. Pray for right to prevail over evil.** The enemy will take advantage of the vulnerable, thus we can offer our protection.
- 6. Call frequently and offer help** with child care, meals, and housework, or any other practical service.
- 7. Offer social invitations,** even though these may well be refused. The tendency to withdraw only deepens the loneliness. Therefore persist in asking.
- 8. Pray for the spouse, too.** Your friend's spouse may be unaware of or confused by his or her mate's temperament.
- 9. Mail Scripture verses** that declare God's faithfulness and love.
- 10. The lie that accompanies despair is that no one can understand.** Wait until you are asked, then assure your friend that there are people who can help.

Exercise of the Body

A suggestion to be used before a small group meeting. Remember continuity is important.

Introduction

It is extremely important to gradually increase your body temperature before any type of strenuous physical activity. Warm-ups should involve your entire body and they should last about 30 minutes, including stretching. Include exercises similar to the exercises or activity you will be performing. Always include your stretching programme towards the end of your warm up.

Examples of warm up exercises

- Light stretching
- Light jogging — this can be on-the-spot
- Light callisthenics — a few jumping jacks, squats
- Low level sports — skaters could skate slowly, swimmers could swim slowly, etc.
- Full stretching

If you get too tired during warm-ups you should do a less strenuous warm-up exercise. During a good warm-up you should not sweat, but rather be very close to sweating.

Warming up exercises

As you describe and demonstrate the following exercises encourage your ladies to do them with you.

Wrists

To exercise your wrist, extend your arms in front of you and raise and lower your hands several times i.e. flop your hands and wrists



up and down. Then rotate your hands 10 times — alternating palms up and palms down. Repeat this sequence five times.

Ankles

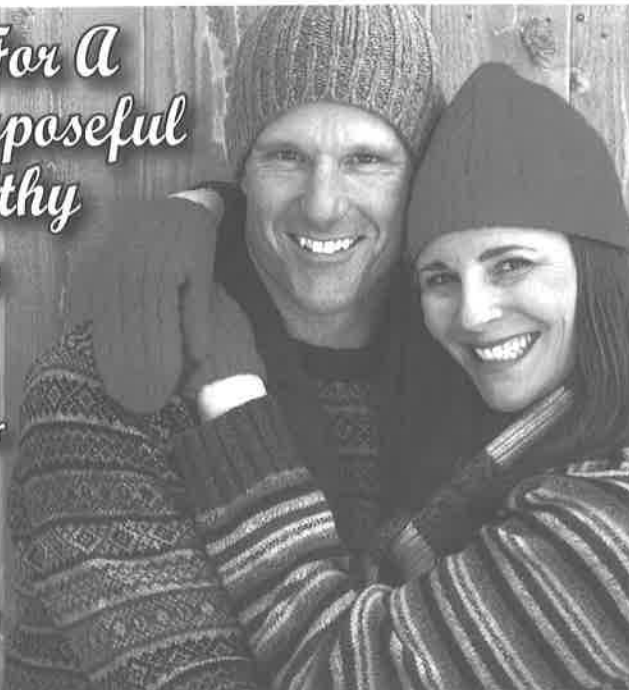
Move your ankles, one at a time, as far as possible to the left, to the right, up and down.

Neck

To exercise the muscles that rotate, flex and extend your neck, slowly turn your head far to the left and hold for three seconds. Then, turn far to the right and hold for three seconds. Next, drop your chin gently to your chest before returning your head slowly to the upright starting position. Repeat the sequence five times.

Praying For A More Purposeful and Healthy Marriage

Use the word
marriage as a
guide to pray for
seven aspects
of a healthy
relationship.



Monday: Money

Look to God for direction regarding money. Pray about finances. Thank God for the ability and opportunity to earn money to meet family needs. Express trust in Him, and ask Him to give His perspective on your possessions. Pray for help to accept earned money as a gift from God and to live contentedly within your means. Pray for good teamwork with your partner in setting short and long-term financial goals.

Tuesday: Anger

Ask God for help to control the tongue and use words that encourage and build up your partner. When the two of you are at odds, pray that respect, humility, and forgiveness will prevail instead of bickering and grudges. If

anger has become unmanageable, ask God to lead you to wise, godly counsel.

Anger is one of the biggest struggles. Angry words damage. Tuesday prayers should help a partner to stop and think before speaking.

Wednesday: Rest and Relaxation

Pray for the discipline to get adequate sleep. Ask for guidance and agreement if you and your partner have difficulty knowing how to make rest a priority, whether on a daily basis or through vacations. Offer your schedule to God.

Thursday: Intimacy

Ask God to strengthen your love — physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Pray for

love
each other
unconditionally,
forgive
one another,
... be patient,
kind, faithful,
and truthful

open communication about personal needs and for the ability to listen to each other. Ask for protection from everyday temptations.

Pray for uninterrupted times to be together.

Pray for attitudes toward each other. In today's fast paced society attitudes get out of sync. A date can be scheduled but an attitude can't. So when a date is set take the time to ask God to bring all aspects of the marriage relationship together, so that the marriage relationship can be strengthened.

Make your
love known
... compliments,
notes,
hand-written
prayers, hugs,
... special
evenings



Friday: Agape

Agape is the Greek word for unconditional, undeserved, sacrificing love. This is the love that God showed when He sent Jesus to the cross for us. Ask God to transform your hearts so that you can love each other unconditionally, forgive one another, keep no record of wrongs, and be patient, kind, faithful, and truthful (1 Corinthians 13). Pray that each of you will become more like Jesus, who modeled this kind of love. Praying for agape love can make a big difference in a marriage. Agape

love helps individuals let go of hurt feelings that build walls of bitterness and resentment and communicate more openly and lovingly and not keep score.

Saturday: Guidance

Ask God to order your priorities and give willing hearts to respond as He directs. Be specific about decisions that are being faced as related to careers, relationships, children, vacations, health, ministry opportunities, and retirement. Discuss benefits and risks and come to unity in decision.

Sunday:

Expressions of Love

Pray for open eyes to see creative ways you and your partner can express your love and commitment. Ask for the discernment and willingness to recognize expressions of love from your spouse that you may be overlooking. Ask God for creative, fresh ways to make your love known (specific compliments, notes, hand-written prayers, hugs, massages, special evenings, personal gifts).

As I make my way from Monday to Sunday, I am praying more comprehensively for my Marriage and I am encouraged to see how God has worked. At times, I'm held accountable as God reminds me that I still haven't responded to His prompting of the week before. God is now invited to work in areas of our relationship that might otherwise remain untouched, and I am seeing answers to my specific prayers.

Laura Shaffer is a freelance writer in Arvada, Colorado

It's a Girl Thing New Zealand Interislander

The Endearing Elegance of a Woman's friendship



Titus 2:4-5

Ordinary Women mentoring ordinary women

Ordinary Women mentoring ordinary women is a natural part of any church family life. Women cannot survive without each other and that's the way God intended it to be. For women who marry and have children, their learning is only just beginning and it is taught by ordinary women around them. Unfortunately because of changes in society and family life, women no longer work side by side in the tasks of caring for their families and growing in their walk with God. We need to take a look at where we are in today's culture, in light of Titus 2: 4-5 and be more intentional, within the corps family/Christian community, making time to encourage one another, no matter what stage of life.

It's a Girl Thing

- Drawing on others' life experiences
- Taking advantage of where others have been
- Growing through their example
- Being encouraged, motivated, guided and challenged in your relationship with Christ and others.
- Knowing gentleness, kindness, caring and sharing through laughter and tears.
- Receiving from women of integrity, confidentiality and truth.

Relationships! Who needs them?

By design, we all do. God created man so that he would have fellowship with Him. He then created woman to have relationship with man. Check it out in Genesis 2:18

God never intended for you to fly solo.

For sure God intended each of us to benefit from the support and encouragement of family, friends, neighbours and fellow believers.

After Eve and Adam messed up their perfect relationship with God and each other in the garden God did not give up on them or us. He graciously offered another way for us to learn how to have healthy, strong, self-esteem-building relationships. He guided Paul to explain to Titus the importance of older women teaching younger women through their own life experiences.

Younger women can't see around the corner, older women have been around many corners.

As wiser, older women walk beside us, we gain wisdom, insight and practical ideas. They help us to laugh and they encourage us with shared tears in critical areas of life. Know that God has someone for you with whom you can lighten your load, give you hope and a new awareness that you are not alone.

It is an empowering support to have a mentor in your life. If you haven't found a more experienced, loving friend to share with regularly here are some guidelines to help you find a safe mentor, teacher, guide, confidante and friend.

- Make a list of qualities you look for in a woman you want to learn from.
- Pray that God would bring such a woman into your life or make you aware of that

woman amongst folk you already know.

- Think back over your life time and list the women who have come alongside you and had a positive impact on your life.
- Write beside each one what it was that influenced you most.
- You will find the above qualities coming through each of the women in your list. As important as it is to have one mentor in our life we also need to surround ourselves with godly women who each have something to contribute.
- Join a small home group in your church (or neighbourhood) where you study the Word together and empower each other through life experiences and prayer. If you don't have one ask God to help you find a way to start one and to bring the right people together.

Qualities to look for when choosing a mentor

- Godliness
- Trustworthiness
- Positive in talking
- Generosity
- Compassion
- Laughter
- Positive attitude
- Encourager
- Tactful
- Healthy family relationships
- Compatibility
- Growing walk with God



Be cautious

- Don't let the relationship become consuming or crowd out other important relationships.
- Don't become emotionally dependent on one another.
- Don't put your mentor on a pedestal.
- Don't lose your own identity.
- Don't let the relationship become ex-

hausting by placing unrealistic demands on one another's time.

Where to find a Godly Mentor

- Church
- Mom's in preschool programmes/ Children's Church
- Bible study/small group
- Extended family
- Friends
- Neighbourhood
- Workplace
- Adults at children's activities in local community
- Community groups
- Volunteer activities
- Support groups



Be a Woman who desires to fear the Lord

Often we feel guilty because we do not compare with the Proverbs 31 woman. Do you think she became that woman 'worth far more than rubies' overnight? I don't think so!

Take heart and remember there is always rain before the rainbow. And don't be surprised when struggles and suffering appear during your journey to become such a woman.

Be encouraged that others will always see our godliness before we do.

Don't be without God's Spirit within you and a mentor alongside you, as you continue to grow in Him.

Offer yourself freely to the world around you as a much-loved and cherished woman of God giving out as others give to you.

Remember there are always others younger than you who haven't been around the corners you have thus far.



Conflict will happen, even when studying the Bible. Christians don't always see eye to eye. Here are several strategies to keep peace during small groups discussion.

Anticipate questions. View each Bible study from the vantage point of your group members. What questions are they apt to raise about interpretation or application of thorny issues in the text? Are you taking a diverse group of adults through Ephesians? Expect questions or firmly entrenched opinions on predestination (1:5,11), spiritual gifts (4:1-12), and the nature of a wife's submission (5:22-24). Are you touring the Gospel of Mark? Count on someone getting tripped up on the unforgivable sin in Mk. 3:28-29.

Set the stage for reasonable discussion. Even in an informal discussion group, some passages or topics need the light provided by background research. To give several minutes of historical context or some other form of scholarly spadework doesn't formalize the Bible study. Rather, it keeps participants from the snare of speculation and fruitless debate.

Are you tracking Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians? You'll come across 1 Cor. 5:5, where Paul *delivers over to Satan* a church member

involved in sexual immorality. Put a rein on the impulse to ask, *What do you think this means?* Instead, delve into a commentary. Be ready to tell the group what Paul meant. Give the two or three most recognized explanations of a passage and the rationale for each. Then point out the interpretation you or your church prefer. Which leads to the third strategy for containing controversies ...

Agree to disagree. Not everyone will adopt your interpretation of difficult doctrines. Admit up front the complexity of the content. Say something like, *For centuries, sincere Bible scholars have viewed this doctrine differently. Though it's an important issue, we aren't going to resolve this controversy to everyone's satisfaction today. Perhaps the wisest approach is to agree to disagree, and move on to other material.*

Set a strict time limit for group coverage of the subject matter. It's easy to spend an inordinate amount of time on an area of disagreement and neglect practical instruction that isn't up for debate.

Excerpted from You Can Lead a Bible Discussion Group by Terry Powell. Published by Questar Publishers Inc. 1996

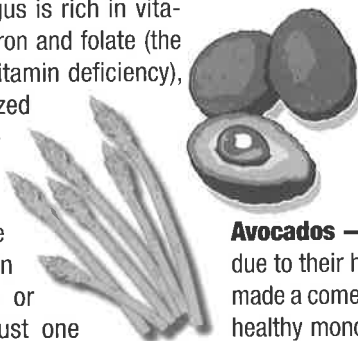
Healthy Foods



These days, the concept of eating foods 'in season' has all but lost its meaning. Modern processing techniques and worldwide distribution has now made a variety of foods available year-round. It is nearly impossible to gauge what season it is from looking at a typical produce section. Spending a day at a your local market is great but when you are unable to do so, visit your local grocer to make healthy produce choices. Enjoy some of the following healthy foods that help cleanse and rejuvenate the body.

cultivated for more than 3,000 to 4,000 years. Not only do apricots help satisfy a sweet tooth, but the vibrant red, orange and yellow hues signal a plentiful supply of antioxidants. They are also rich with beta-carotene and lycopene, two carotenoids, important in reducing the artery-clogging LDL cholesterol and maintain a healthy heart.

Asparagus — Asparagus is rich in vitamins A and C, calcium, iron and folate (the world's most common vitamin deficiency), asparagus has been prized for its culinary and medicinal purposes since ancient times. Choose asparagus stalks that are rounded, with firm, thin stems and dark green or purplish closed tips. Just one cup of cooked asparagus provides 67 per cent of the daily requirement for folate, essential for heart health and prevention of birth defects.



Basil — A popular herb that can enhance the flavours of your favourite pasta sauce or spring salad, basil is a wonderful source of vitamin A.

Avocados — Previously avoided by dieters due to their high fat content, avocados have made a comeback as a great source of heart-healthy monounsaturated fats to help lower cholesterol. By volume, avocados are also 50 per cent higher in potassium than bananas.

Salmon — The health benefits of eating fatty, cold-water fish are widely known, but salmon contains the highest volume of omega-3 fatty acids, essential for maintaining good heart health. Choose wild over farmed salmon whenever possible.



Green beans — Harvested while still immature when the inner bean is just beginning to form, they are one of the few bean varieties that can be eaten fresh. With a healthy supply of beta-carotene and vitamins A and C, green beans help protect the body's water-soluble parts from oxygen-free radical damage.



Apricots — Apricots were first discovered in China and have been

*Adapted from Women's Ministries
Resources Australia Eastern Territory*

Set up an evening of information for parents in your Church/community and bring in policeman/woman to speak to your group.

A child looking for information about household pets feeds a simple word into an Internet search-engine. Within seconds a page comes up before her eyes. The images are shocking, the acts they portray, depraved. The child exits the web site in confusion and haste. The page remains embedded in the computer.

The parents, appalled and alarmed as they discover the page, take action. The computer is protected, Internet access rendered secure. But the images have been seen and digested, no matter how fleetingly, and nothing can undo the exposure. Innocence is lost.

For the victims of other forms of abuse perpetrated via the Internet, the loss is much more profound.

That is why parents need to be alert to the inherent dangers of Internet surfing or chat lines. While children in affluent countries, generally speaking, may not have to face the horrific experience of being sold or carted off and forced into the sex trade, they too are under threat of abuse.

As insidious as the viruses that plague the web, potential child sex offenders are just a cyber-step away, seeking to lure them unsuspectingly into their lairs — whether they be of the “virtual” or physical kind.

Innocence Lost



A police officer in Canada — who patrols the “information superhighway” each day, says, “It really doesn’t take long to connect with a pedophile — usually only two or three minutes. They are out there waiting to prey on children.”

It is true that the Internet has opened up a wonderful new world for our children to explore, but as more and more people purchase personal computers and enter “cyberspace” in order to send mail, browse for information and visit chat rooms, security becomes harder to monitor and guarantee.

Some of the risks children face are:

- exposure to sexual or violent material
- being tricked into meeting with a pedophile
- harassing messages

There are telltale signs to watch for when a child is indulging in unhealthy Internet activity. Be alert to the following clues. It may be necessary to take action if your child:

- begins to spend unusual amounts of time online, especially at night.
- suddenly switches the computer screen off when you enter the room.
- uses a large number of disks to store material from online services.
- hides disks in unlikely places.
- stores pornography on the computer. (Learn how to check the history records of recent Internet activity and where to access temporary Internet files.)
- receives mail, gifts or packages from someone you don't know.
- receives telephone calls from people you don't know or is making long distance telephone calls to numbers you don't recognize.
- becomes withdrawn and uncommunicative.

Seven helpful guidelines for parents have been drawn up:

- 1. Impress upon your child** the importance of never giving any personal information such as the family name, home address, phone number, or even the name of their school to anyone they talk to online.
- 2. Monitor your child's** use of online services just as you would any of their entertainment activities.
- 3. Advise your child** that the people they talk to online may not be who they say they are. Any man with a youthful voice can parade as a 15-year-old boy who likes computers.
- 4. Advise your child** not to arrange a face-to-face meeting with anyone without your permission. If they want to meet with someone you should make sure it is in a public place and be present too.
- 5. Advise your child** never to respond to threatening or obscene messages.

6. Acquire software that will help block access to adult material.

7. Devise a list of safe web sites for them to visit and update it regularly from reliable sources.

Conclusion

These brief guidelines are appropriate for those whose incursion into undesirable Internet zones is innocent and unintentional.

Unfortunately, there is not much that can be done to restrict the actions of the computer-literate teenager who is determined to enter adult sites.



What may be forbidden on the home PC can be accessed at an Internet/Cyber Café or on their video phone or, as soon may be common, on their 3G (third generation) phone.

It really all boils down to trust and the level of communication that there is between parent and child.

However, help is at hand and there are possible solutions on the Internet itself — some free; some at a price.

For mobile phone security contact the phone manufacturers to find out what kind of child protection is available.

Where did your weekend go?

Can you even remember the last time you and your family did something together just for the fun of it?

Having downtime with your family helps you build a stronger sense of connection and the ability to express emotional needs to one another. Try the following suggestions for reinvigorating yourself and your family over the next several months. They are simple and fun.

Go on a scavenger hunt

Whether it's a hunt organized by a museum or your city, or one you create yourself through your neighborhood or at home, your family will bond and form special memories while exploring.

Read, *The Book of New Family Traditions* by Meg Cox. Obtainable through your local library or book store.

For younger children, try drawing everyday items. If your children are older, split up into groups and plan a hunt through your neighborhood, park, or town. Or create a themed hunt for Halloween or Thanksgiving. Go online to find museum or city hunt events in your area.

Relive the good times

Another way to forge stronger bonds with one another is to savor wonderful memories from previous experiences. Relive your meaningful

events by making scrapbooks together.

Today's families don't have enough of a strong sense of history together, because of fragmentation in families. It boosts a child's self-esteem to hear stories of how much her parents wanted her and love her.

Reviewing photos, tapes, or other mementos or

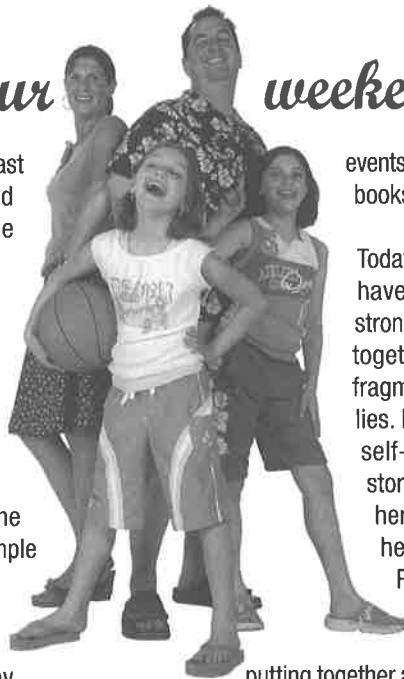
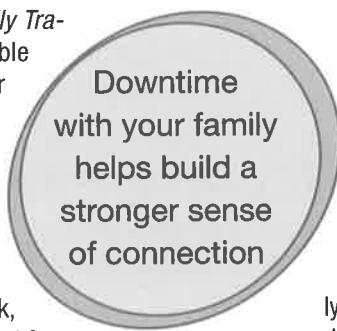
putting together a scrapbook offers a context in which to share those feelings.

Parents benefit too. "There is nothing that sounds quite as wonderful as a child's unbridled laughter," says Dr.

Donnica Moore, president of the Sapphire Women's Health Group. "That's the payback you get from those videos and photos."

Plant a garden

Put down your roots—literally. Plan a mini-science lesson and have the whole family read up on what types of trees and plants are native to your area and what birds and insects they attract. (Fall is a good time to plant trees or spring-blooming bulbs.) Head off to the nursery to make your selections, buy kid-size tools for the little ones. Everyone can help with the planting.



Gardening is a great family activity, because you're re-making the place where you live, says one writer. When you plant something, it's there because of you. It also helps teach kids patience. You plant the seeds now to reap your rewards down the line.

Do good, together

Serve lunch at a soup kitchen. Walk dogs at the local animal shelter. Clean up a park. Visit with elders in a seniors' residence. Performing community service with your family is a deeply meaningful way to help others while you help yourselves.

Kids should understand that other people may have less than they do, and it is important to be grateful for what you do have. Volunteering promotes a sense of empathy in children and adults, an ability to step out of their own lives and connect to the broader world.

Just hang out

Our culture over-schedules families. We focus on doing and forget about being, sometimes you just need to sit back and relax, which you can do almost anywhere and it's free.

Spend more time at playgrounds or watch clouds float by or take the dog for a long, long walk. You'll be doing everyone a favor. "Kids need quiet leisure time, too," It's very healthy.

One caution, this doesn't mean sprawling out in front of the TV together. Watching TV is only



truly relaxing if you do it for a short period of time. Studies have shown that levels of stress hormones actually increase the more one watches TV.

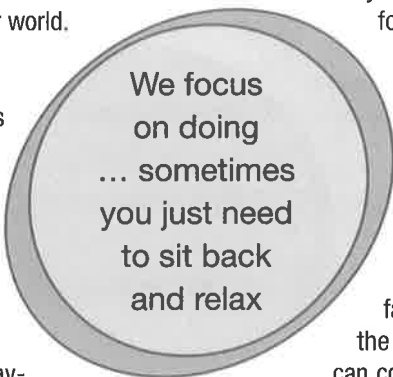
Bonus: Design a family symbol

A family is like a team, and creating a banner or crest helps you define what yours is all about, it's also a bit of a bonding thing.

Maybe designing a coat of arms for your family would be fun, everyone gets to pick a symbol for him or herself. For example, if Dad likes to play golf, his emblem could be a golf club.

Assign the artist in the family to draw the banner, the one who likes to write can come up with a motto, and everyone can help make it. Cut figures out, then glue them to a flag-size piece of felt, which is an inexpensive backdrop. Hang the finished product in the kitchen or above a doorway to show it off.

Adapted for Cedar Springs by Linda Bradbury, Southern Territory, USA



Baby Song Story

Baby Song began as a Salvation Army initiative in Sweden, and quickly spread to both Norway and Denmark in the early 90's. It has since been picked up in other countries as well, including The United Kingdom, The Netherlands, The United States, and has now come to Canada and Bermuda.

Baby Song has been successful in reaching un-churched families in many places. It is more than just a program — it is about relationships and fellowship. It is about making a positive impact, through music, singing and dancing.

This resource has been put together specifically for the Canada and Bermuda Territory. Some of the material has been translated and adapted from Swedish, Norwegian and Danish materials. Captain A. A. Margareta Ivarsson played a vital role in starting "Baby Song" within The Salvation Army, and much of the original Scandinavian material is her work.

Background

It all started with Doctor John Lind's (1909-1983) curiosity about the fetus and what it can experience in the mother's womb. After years of research we now know a lot about what the fetus can experience, hear and feel. In the fifth month of pregnancy and possibly earlier the fetus can hear sounds such as it's mother's voice and pulse and even sounds

from outside of the womb. Parents are able to relate to their unborn baby through musical experiences, songs, playing instruments and listening to music together. As a newborn, the baby 'remembers' the voices, sounds and melodies and recognizes safety. It is easy to understand the importance of these familiar experiences in adjusting to the new and traumatic world the baby enters as a newborn.

Baby Song Groups

This research stimulated music teachers and others working with young children to start Baby Song groups. Some music teachers in different churches in Sweden saw the possibility of a new way of communicating with young families through the church. The Salvation Army in Sweden picked up the program in the early 90's and has seen a tremendous growth for the last decade affecting every aspect of its ministry and mission.

Baby Song and the Church

Why is this program successful in churches? Churches have a broad music tradition. We have facilities and instruments. We have music included in almost everything



we do. People who are not affiliated with a church often have little or no access to music and even if they do, they do not share in the weekly habit of singing together with others. Doing Baby Song also brings new people into the church and every healthy church welcomes this phenomenon as Christ welcomes everyone into the kingdom of God.

Family Ministry

Traditionally, churches, and The Salvation Army in particular, have had plenty of outreach to children in well-developed Sunday school programs and other youth programs. The difference with Baby Song is that the initiative lies with the parent on behalf of the parent and the baby. This creates a family ministry that opens a new world of close contacts between Baby Song leaders and families.

Social Fellowship

The social fellowship provided by the Baby Song group creates an atmosphere of trust and safety that will determine whether the new family will feel at home in church just for a couple of months or for life.

After the approximately 45 minute music program which includes singing, dancing, listening to music, playing and

listening to rhythms, it is time for coffee break. When the children are fed or (if they are older) when they play with each other, the adults share wide-ranging discussions about almost everything. This treasured time allows relationships to begin and grow in the Kingdom of God.

Who is running the program?

It is important that the whole church is involved in this program. The music leader leads the music time, a "grandmother" or "grandfather" can lend a hand with older siblings or with coffee and cookies, the Pastors can make themselves known and available. Special prayer groups can be encouraged to pray beforehand and during the program. More than once new people have expressed that they feel like there is something 'special' and 'powerful' about the facilities where this program is happening. We can then explain that God is present in a special way because others are praying for us.

Music Environment

The idea is not just to do Baby Song once a week, but to provide families with music that can be used at home:

- When your baby needs help falling asleep
- When you want to sing for fun
- When you want to dance with your child
- When you want to express belief in God's love and care for every child and family

In Baby Song, we allow music to help us express who we are before God, that we are created in his image.





Music Matters ... A Developmental Perspective

Lori Miller, U.S.A.



There has been a great deal of research in the last several years regarding the impact of music on a child's development. Each study focuses on different areas of music and development, yet with all of the variations in research, scientists and developmental specialists agree... MUSIC MATTERS!

Music can impact a child's development in many different ways, but the most basic and important benefits are the following:

Physical Development: Large muscles develop and coordination improves as children move with the music. Gross motor skills are enhanced as a result. Children can release their endless energy by hopping, wiggling, swaying, bouncing, stomping and twirling to music. Fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination are developed when children are encouraged to play basic instruments such as drums or tambourines. Songs and nursery rhymes with movement and motion encourage both gross motor and fine motor development.

Emotional Development:

Music can be used to calm a frustrated or angry child. Often, children express and deal with their emotions through music. Participating in musical activities helps children gain confidence. A child's cultural heritage can be affirmed when favourite family songs are shared with others. Music can also play a vital role in encouraging bonding between a child and

his/her parent. Eye contact and close interaction during musical moments provides boundless opportunities to express love and care for both the adult and the child.

Intellectual Development: When children sing they are developing their language skills. A child's memory is challenged as they memorize the lyrics to a song. Songs about shape, colour and size help with vocabulary and concept development. Listening skills develop as children listen to the sounds, words and music. Attention span lengthens and concentration improves. As a child's musical skills improve, their reasoning and thinking skills will also improve.

Social Development: Children learn cooperation, develop patience, and discover how to obey rules when playing music with a group. Singing with others promotes feelings of togetherness and belonging and helps in development of friendships. Cultural songs make children aware of their own as well as the heritage of others.

Every child is unique and develops at his/her own pace. This is a rough guide to a child's potential musical development.

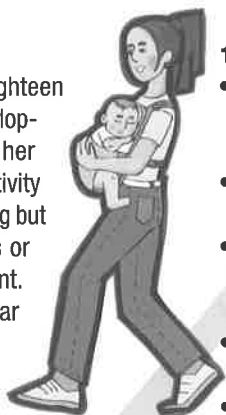
Prenatal:

- A baby in the womb can hear sounds from 20 weeks after conception.



0 - 18 months:

- From conception to eighteen months a baby is developing rapidly and his or her response to musical activity will not only be rewarding but highly beneficial to his or her general development.
- At birth babies can hear high-pitched noises, may be calmed by lower sounds and can locate sounds in front of them. They will be startled by a loud or sudden sound. By four weeks they prefer high-pitched sounds and start to respond to the sound of your voice. They will recognize whether sound is coming from behind or in front.
- From three months they may respond actively to music by, for example, swaying and turning towards the sound and vocalizing vowel sounds like "Aah", "Eee" and "Ooo".
- Early on they begin to recognize familiar voices and respond differently to the sound of strange voices.
- By six months they start imitating sounds e.g. Boo! La!
- At seven months they will look toward sounds from above and below and be able to tell tunes apart.
- By nine months they respond to familiar songs. Their singing may follow a familiar melodic pattern.
- From one year they will begin to lose the capacity to hear very high-pitched sounds but start to discover musical pulse, and create sounds by banging everyday objects.
- Some babies say their first words as early as eight months. Many begin to talk around eighteen months and some take a little longer. Singing with young babies can speed up this process.



18 months - 3 years:

- By eighteen months young children may start to respond to music in a coordinated way.
- Language skills can develop further through singing and imitation.
- Moving and responding to music can help develop memory and hand/eye coordination.
- They will learn to distinguish between loud and quiet, fast and slow.
- They begin to be aware of a beat in the music and recognize different rhythms.
- They will learn the words to simple songs and develop the coordination needed to play simple instruments, for example, simple drums or bells.
- This is when they begin to find out how to cooperate with other children.



3-5 years:

- Young children may begin to become more aware of pitch and rhythm.
- They will learn to sing more complex songs as language skills grow and their vocal chords develop.
- They can cope with more sophisticated movement to music.
- They will take pleasure in playing and exploring new sounds and instruments.



Craft and Inspiration Group

Beverley Voisin, Kitchener, Ontario

Name of Group

The Parent-Child Resource Centre

Type of Group

Craft and Inspiration Group

- Offered for women with young children and/or any woman who enjoys being creative and is open to some spiritual inspiration in their lives.



Aim of Group



- To provide an opportunity for moms to have a break from home and child care responsibilities.
- To provide an opportunity for women to do craft projects and share creative ideas.
- To provide an opportunity for informal, social support.
- To provide an opportunity for women to hear the Gospel and benefit from spiritual support in a non-judgmental atmosphere.
- To provide an opportunity for bridging between community programs and Corps ministry.

Target Group

- Women at home with young children.
- Women who enjoy being creative.
- Women who would benefit from social and spiritual support.

Main focus of Group

- Social and creative outlet for participants.
- Spiritual ministry

Secondary Focus

- Opportunity to create informal links with the larger faith community.

Duration of Program

- Weekly two hour sessions with a 10 minute devotion at the end.
- September to June





Outline of Program



- Craft session is often informal, for women to bring their own project.
- Planned craft sessions have included: Scrap-booking; Stamping and Card-making
- Devotional program include an informal discussion of a topic with a scripture reading.
- Program closes with requests for prayer.

Cost for Participants

- \$1./child for childcare
- \$2-5. for craft projects



Leadership

- A program leader is necessary to coordinate the group activities and provide continuity of support.

Support Personnel

- Child care staff or volunteers

Equipment

Basic craft supplies – scissors, cutters, glue guns

Anticipated Results

- Increase in social support for participants.
- Increase in connection between faith community and program participants.
- Increase in spiritual knowledge and understanding of the Bible.
- Increase in spiritual support for participants

M.O.P.S. — Mothers of Pre-schoolers

Each Community has a group of young women with babies and toddlers, women who have left busy careers to start a family. This is an opportunity to introduce them to a new circle of friends and activities.

Mothers and children learn and interact in a supportive, non-judgemental environment which promotes sharing and personal growth. Devotional time is part of every program.

Establish objectives before starting the program. Goals should be in place for both mother and child(ren). The atmosphere must be conducive. Music can be played prior to the program each week. Napkins, tablecloths,

flowers, used in decorating always makes the Mom's feel very special.

The program for the Moms usually incorporates one or two of the following:

- Craft Session
- Speaker (topic relevant to mothers)
- Sharing Time
- Film
- Demonstration (cooking, sewing, cake decorating)



Free child-care is provided with a balanced program of play, stories, crafts, sing song and snack.

Moms and Tots

Heather Beadle, Calgary, Alberta



The Moms and Tots support group meets a need for many young, single mothers, from the surrounding neighbourhood.

Mothers with next to no family support, spend their time looking after their children and trying to budget as best they can. They rarely have any extra money and have not been able to cultivate many close friends. They handle their worries about the children's health, finances, their own personal feelings, frustrations, and loneliness without the support of parents or a spouse.

The Moms and Tots group offers a common meeting ground for these young mothers and their children where they can

**Love, acceptance
and sharing can
be the first step
in opening doors**



share with other women who are in similar circumstances and build a support system with new friends. They learn of community

resources available to them, are taught good nutrition, and how to understand the many stages of growth in their children's lives. Budgeting and their legal rights are also discussed. There are movies, crafts, outings, spiritual nourishment and times of sharing in discussion groups. These young Mom's learn to look at their circumstances in a new light, to accept themselves and be the very best mothers they can be.

Love, acceptance and sharing can be the first step in opening doors for a brighter future.

Devotions for Mom's of Pre Schoolers

Love

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 13: 1

God's love sees beyond our imperfections and weaknesses and not only accepts them, but uses them. His love gives us hope because He sees our potential. While many of us are burdened by our past failures, God sees the person we are on our way to becoming. His love hopes all things, because He has given us the power to be all that we can be through Him. When we accept the fact that God loves us right now, at this moment — in spite of our imperfections — we are given the freedom to see ourselves as He sees us.

Christ's rest is not a rest *from* work, but *in* work ...

"Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. Jeremiah 6:16

The Bible says we are unique. We were all created with special gifts, abilities right from the start.

You shaped me first inside and then out. You formed me in my mother's womb. Psalm 139: 13 (The Message)



I made you
in your mother's
womb, I chose
you. Before you
were born

Do you know that God has shaped each of us to fulfill His special plan using all aspects of our personality:

Our SPIRITUAL GIFTS
Our HEART
Our ABILITIES
Our PERSONALITY
Our EXPERIENCES

Not only do these verses give us a model for unconditional love in our own relationships, it gives us a message we can claim.

"Love ... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." 1 Corinthians 13:7-8.

Refreshment, Rest

Websters Dictionary defines the word rest as 'to cease from action or motion'. A refreshed body is the result of a good nights sleep. Spiritual rest is also required to experience a refreshed soul. God provides this through His spirit working in our lives. In the midst of work there is rest.

- What was one of the first moments you remember knowing that GOD was there?
- Are there any special experiences that you remember God giving you a sense of His hand on your life?
- What did you learn about God in that experience?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- Where are you now in your spiritual experience? What do you need to hear from God?

From: Rick Warren. Purpose Driven Life.

Before I made you in your mother's womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work. Jeremiah 1:5

Plugging Kids into Your Small Group

Corinne Hamada Holmquist

Most of us could easily rattle off ten good reasons not to include children in our small groups. But consider these reasons for plugging the children in:

- Parents get the opportunity to build convictions and values with their children as they examine the Scriptures together.
- Parents can learn different styles of discipline, affirmation, teaching, etc., as they observe each other.
- Children get a vivid picture of group prayer, celebration, edification, and fun in an extended family.
- Children observe the importance of lifelong learning as they see their parents respond to the Word and apply it to their lives.
- Parents learn from their children how to approach Christ with simplicity and wonder.

For a season (or an occasional session), consider embracing children into your small group. Here's one way to do it.

Sample Session: Creation and Creativity

At the end of the session, members should be able to:

- Describe how the psalmist viewed God and what he meant by the word hand in Ps.95:1-7.
- See and feel the importance, power, and creativity of their own hands.
- Express creatively their responses to Ps. 95:1-7.

Activities

In pairs, discuss the following (allow 5 min-



utes): Everybody has some used-to-thinks — those things you used to think and now don't think any more. Discuss some of your used-to-thinks about God.

Read and discuss Ps. 95:1-7. Allow ten minutes in groups of four to six adults and children. Then come together as a large group to share. What is the writer's idea or image of God? What does he think God is like? What is the significance or meaning of the words hand or hands?

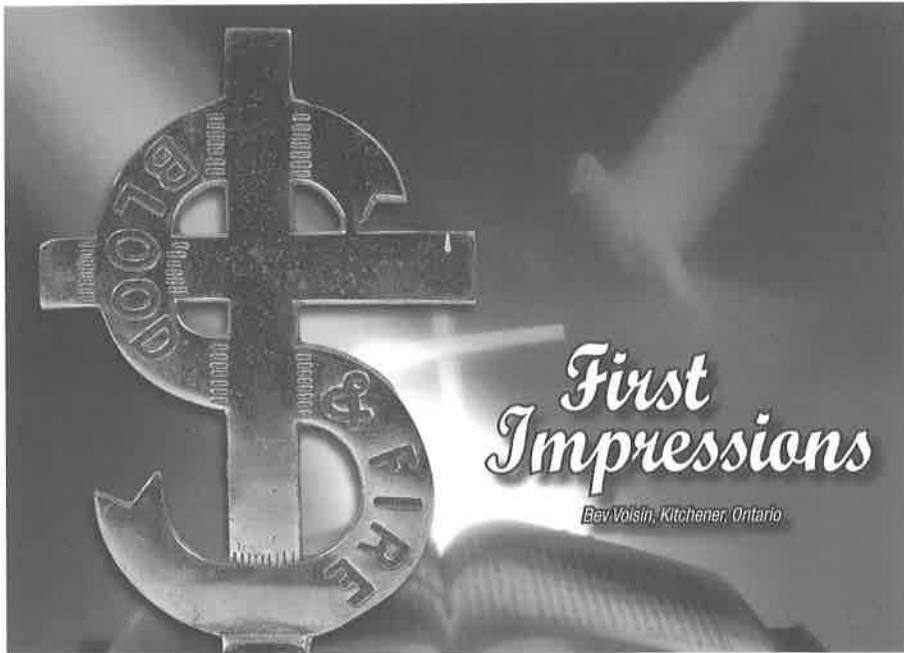
Choose one of the following:

Have everyone look at their own hands and respond to the following questions:

- What are some things you do with your hands that are important or fun?
- Why do you think the psalmist used the word hands as a key part of this psalm?

Tips for Meeting with Kids

- Design activities around a theme. Consider topics with appeal to all ages such as dreams and hopes, losing, conflict resolution, etc.
- Change an activity every 15-20 minutes, especially if young children are present.
- Warm up with a group game or two to help people feel at home.
- Include a news time for sharing important happenings of the week, especially from the children.
- Adapt songs, games and questions to include the youngest person present.



The following outline can be used in a group where people are new to The Salvation Army. In our setting, it is a Craft and Inspiration Group, where women meet to be creative and then are open to taking part in a short devotional thought. An informal discussion, followed by a supporting word of scripture has provided women with an opportunity to explore faith issues. One of the things we discovered, was their curiosity about The Salvation Army.

Climate Setting:

- Set up a display table of Salvation Army memorabilia and picture books.
- Display a current Salvation Army uniform, draped over a chair.

Session Outline:

- Are first impressions important?
- Can you think of a first impression that proved to be wrong?
- What changed your first impression?

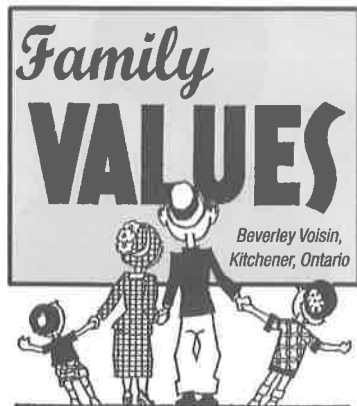
First impressions are usually based on assumptions — little pieces of information that are only part of the whole. When we get to know more, our first impression can change quite dramatically.

- What was your first impression of The Salvation Army?
- What are some of the things that you associated with The Salvation Army?
- What have you since found out about The Salvation Army?
- Are there any spiritual lessons you have learned since you came to The Salvation Army?

Bringing it home...

- What is the first impression someone would have of you? How would you like God to help you change the first impression you make?

Scripture: 2 Peter 3:9



Objectives:

- To recognize the factors that influence and shape our values.
- To identify factors that influences our parenting.
- To identify values that are important to us as parents.
- To identify strategies for modeling our values in our family.

Introductions: Warm Up

- Something I'm working on...
- Ask parents to share the best parenting advice they have received.

Or: Role Models

- Ask parents to share who their models have been as parents?
- Ask them to share why that person influenced them or how. *Duration: 15 minutes*

Introduction: Introduce the topic Family Values

What are values? Refer to the hand out for a definition. *Duration: 5 minutes*

Worksheet: Family Values

What or who influence our values? Where do they come from?

- What are the factors that have influenced us, both whether positive or negative

Flip Chart

Discuss from worksheet or use flip chart to make an inventory of factors that influence our value system.

Duration: 15 minutes

Worksheet: Question #2

Write down one value which was important in your home growing up? Is this a value you consider to be important in your own home?

- Discuss and have individuals share if they are comfortable
- Discuss what we are changing or doing differently in our own home

Duration: 10 minutes

Take a 10 to 15 minute break for fellowship and refreshment

Worksheet: Question #3

Write down three values that are important to you, which one is most important and why?

- Have participants write their values down and identify which is most important
- Feedback/discussion — was it hard to identify three values? How did you come up with them?
- Ask for people to share

Duration: 10-15 minutes

Worksheet: Question #4

How can we be good role models?

Divide into groups

- Have them pick one or two of their values and brainstorm strategies for modeling their values.
- Provide time for feedback to hear from each group.

Duration: 15 minutes

Closing: Feedback

Was it helpful to look at our values? How will it be helpful this week as you spend time with your children?

A Great Pre-School

10 signs a parent will look for in selecting a GREAT pre-school for 3 -6 year olds.

1 Children spend most of their time playing and working with materials or with other children. They do not wander aimlessly, and they are not expected to sit quietly for long periods of time.

2 Children have access to various activities throughout the day. Look for assorted building blocks and other construction materials, props for pretend play, picture books, paints and other art materials, and table toys such as matching games, pegboards, and puzzles. Children should not all be doing the same thing at the same time.



3 Teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day. They do not spend all their time with the whole group.



4 The classroom is decorated with children's original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling, and stories dictated by children to teachers.

5 Children learn numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences. The natural world of plants and animals and meaningful activities like cooking, taking attendance, or serving snack provide the basis for learning activities.

6 Children work on projects and have long periods of time, at least one hour

to play and explore. Worksheets are used little if at all.

7 Children have an opportunity to play outside every day. Outdoor play is never sacrificed for more instructional time.

8 Teachers read books to children individually or in small groups throughout the day, not just at group story time.

9 Curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help. Teachers recognize that children's different backgrounds and experiences mean that they do not learn the same things at the same time in the same way.

10 Children and their parents look forward to school. Parents feel secure about sending their child to the program. Children are happy to attend; they do not cry regularly or complain of feeling sick.

Working With Pre-Schoolers

Program Planning

Program planning should centre on the physical needs of God's 'little people'. Children's first experiences within a church setting will leave an indelible impression on them. Pre-schoolers usually come from a very small world, which revolves around their home and its familiarity. 'Stepping out' in a big world can be frightening, and children need a foundation of security and trust. In a new environment this can be expressed as:

- The same friendly leaders each week, same familiar room and play areas.
- The same regular routine and consistent expectations regarding their behaviour
- A welcoming smile

Never forget that one of the most incredible things about our Christian faith is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). He didn't wait until we were perfect before He loved us.

Pre-Schoolers' Environment

A Safe Environment

Pre-school age is a clumsy stage and children cannot predict the consequences of their actions.

- Is your environment secure both physically and emotionally?
- Do you need to move any possible physical dangers?
- Are you instilling loving discipline and protecting children, as far as possible, from abuse?

A Restful Environment

A quiet, calm atmosphere helps children to settle well; wise use of colour is important.

- Primary colours create a cheerful look, pastels tranquility
- Strong colours — especially red

— should be used sparingly.

- Vibrant colours contribute to hyperactivity.

Use a gentle manner and quiet tone of voice to promote a restful environment.



Balance Activity and Rest

Pre-school children tend to have bursts of energy and then tire easily, so the program needs to accommodate both active and restful times.

Space for Activities

If space is cramped, children tend to be hard to motivate when trying new things.

Equipment

- Pre-schoolers' skills are limited, so provide user friendly equipment
- Chairs and tables should be suited to children's height.
- Paper size should be large, pencils, crayons

Activities

- Provide a time of free play to commence the session.
- Plan content with one or more known activities and one that offers a new challenge.
- Evaluate success of an activity by how much the children get involved with it.
- Follow an energetic game with a quiet activity.
- If session time is lengthy, consider a

rest/sleep period.

- Conclude session with 'mat time'— make it a comfortable and cozy place

'Mat Time'

- Start this time with lively songs and rhymes that use energy.
- Use familiar material.
- Introduce only one new song or rhyme at a time.
- Don't introduce something new every week.

Songs and Rhymes

Children enjoy repetition and learn by hearing the user-friendly equipment. Some children will simply sit and watch during singing time, but don't worry, they're absorbing by listening. Do not force a child to participate. Sometimes the use of dolls and other toys helps them feel secure and encourages participation. Don't give them toys that will take away from what you are doing.

- Have simple percussion instruments that help them to participate
- Teach the children a signal that means 'stop' when using the instruments.
- Use drama with stories, they love being the 'star of the show'.

Balanced Diet

Ensure your snacks are nutritious and refreshing.

Adult Support

The younger the children, the more they will need individual support and attention. Ideally there should be one helper to every five children, and less than fifteen children in any group activity. Two or more leaders working together with a group have the advantage of giving individual attention if needed.

Leaders' Role

Pre-schoolers learn through the sense of

touch. This is why 'hands-on' activities are so important, Young children rely on multi-sensory experiences and they learn more by doing rather than by sitting and listening, or looking at a picture. In all aspects of your program:

- Make sure you involve the children.
- Watch that leaders don't take over, rather than help the children.
- Get to know the children's names, use when speaking with or to a child.

Praying with Pre-Schoolers

Most of us have childhood memories of simple bedtime prayers e.g. 'gentle Jesus'. Your example will develop their awareness of prayer. We need to develop their concept of God as a friend or parent they can talk with at anytime, anywhere, and about anything.

Pre-schoolers' prayers move from 'please God' to, 'thank you' to 'sorry' prayers as they mature. By six years of age they have begun to distinguish right from wrong and realise they are responsible for their behaviour.

- Don't expect children to sit totally still with hands folded and eyes closed.
- Familiarity brings security.
- Use short phrases they understand.
- Children enjoy repeating a line after a leader.
- If not using a rhyme prayer, include their news within your prayer.
- In group time simple one-line 'thank you' prayers are a good starting point.

It is not perfection that matters, but the fun of the experience itself. Children do not forget the things that are meaningful to them, and when they take an active part in the learning situation it is meaningful.

Have a wonderful time leading your little ones in their first steps toward God!

Adapted from Inter-Islander, NZ, Fiji & Tonga Territory

Clouds

Major Ida Krommenhoek (R) Toronto, Ontario

Every summer when I sit on the balcony, I see little more than the clouds that are floating by and I imagine all kinds of pictures that I can see in them. It is a fascinating game and although "clouds" seem to have a negative meaning most of the time, we also know that they can be a positive thing.

Share in the reading of this chorus:

*Why should I care, if the sun
does not shine?
Jesus is mine, all of the time.
Why should I care if the
storm-clouds are low?
Jesus is with me, I know!
He will never forsake me, I'm
under His wing;
Though trials o'ertake me, I
will praise Him and sing!
I am ever so happy, so why
should I care if the sun
does not shine?
Jesus is mine all the time.*

Song: SASB 10 *Joyful, joyful we adore thee*
(tune 435)

Prayer focus: Song SASB 426 *I want dear Lord ...* (tune 617)

Share a Prayer: Encourage the ladies to offer prayers for the challenges each family may be facing.

Scripture: Genesis 9:13,14,15



Scripture on a Cloud: Print the following bible verses on clouds and have ladies read them. (Exodus 16:10, Job: 38:37, Psalm 36: 5, Psalm 1, Matthew 17: 5, Luke 21: 27, Revelation 1: 7)

Games: Have the women draw a cloud on a piece of paper and exchange papers, the people then have to guess what the clouds could portray. Have cotton balls available and a long table. See how many balls, starting at the short end of the table, each one can blow to the end of the table, without going off the sides.

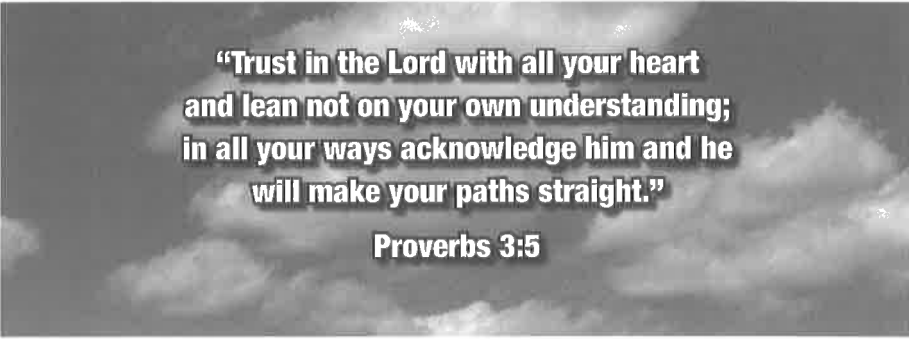
Song: SASB 280 *Will your anchor hold*
(Tune 60)

Devotional: "Trust His Heart"

1 Kings 18: 44 The seventh time the servant reported: "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea". This is a story about believing what the messenger of God said. Maybe you still remember this story about the drought that existed in Israel and the faith and courage of Elijah, which brought on the

for us." ... I will never leave you nor forsake you." Joshua 1:5. His amazing presence will strengthen our hearts when the clouds of life are hanging low. Sometimes we may miss the experience of His presence because we occupy our hearts and minds with a desire to fix things our way instead of allowing God to work out His purpose and plan in our lives.

Life will always present us with challenges, even the strongest believer finds it very



**"Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him and he
will make your paths straight."**

Proverbs 3:5

rain, from Sunday school days. Six times the servant said that he had not seen any rain coming but the seventh time, said: "A cloud, as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea".

Sometimes our soul seems as dry as the land is during summer. I have known these times, maybe more deeply than some people because of suffering from depression. It makes it difficult to hold on to my faith, but I have to go back to some of these stories in the Bible to renew my faith.

Six times the servant went back and saw nothing, but the seventh time a cloud as small as a man's hand, was finally visible. The Israelites were encouraged to see the visible symbol of God's presence among them through the cloud. God's presence in the midst of our lives is an amazing promise that enables us to face each day with courage. The promise God gave to Moses is true

difficult to trust the Lord, yet we are encouraged to trust that His hand is working in our lives.

Song 165, verse 4 Charles Wesley wrote:

*Saw you not the cloud arise,
Little as a human hand?
Now it spreads along the skies,
Hangs o'er all the thirsty land;
Lo! the promise of a shower
Drops already from above;
And the Lord will surely pour
All the Spirit of His Love!*

Sing: Chorus of song 637

*Showers of blessing, showers of blessing
we need;
Mercy drops round me us falling, but for the
showers we plead.*

Closing Prayer & Refreshments

Fragrances of Different Kinds

Nina Warren, Grand Bank, NL

Beginning Thoughts:

*A little thought, a little care
Makes all the difference everywhere
A helping hand along the way
Can mean so much to someone's day.
We must not think we try in vain
For after kindly deeds, remain
A fragrance; something left behind
That others, as they pass, will find.
The sweetest fragrance often flows
From those who feel life's pain;
They firmly trust in God's great love
And in that love remain.*

Chorus: (tune: *Coming this way*)

*Sweet Rose of Sharon blooming for me
Jesus it is an emblem of thee.
Beautiful flower, fairest that grows
I'm glad I've found thee sweet Sharon's
Rose.*

Prayer:

Lord, help me sow the seeds of kindness in the garden of some heart. Help me sow the seeds of patience, and water every part. Help me sow the seeds of love, your love to someone show; help me sow the seeds of hope and joy into a beautiful, fragrant hue to be loved and kept and used for you to spread your scent throughout the land from heart to heart and man to man. Amen. (Nina Warren)

Smell the Fragrance Now:

I'm sure you've heard someone say, 'Wake up and smell the roses'. One of the most tragic things about human nature is that some of us put off living. We sleep, we dream of some magical, fragrant rose garden that lies over the horizon. Wake up — don't sleep — don't



dream. Wake up and smell the fragrance of the roses that bloom outside your window today. The fragrance of family and friends, of loving and sharing, of enjoying all that God gives to us, then to bloom where we are planted and spread our own fragrance right there at this moment now before the fragrance is gone; before the rose fades and is withered. For we can never be certain when life's fragrance will be taken from us.

Chorus:

Lord, I thank you for the joy of living

Scripture Fragrances:

F Friends — *Proverbs 18:24 and 17:17a*

A man that hath friends must show himself friendly and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. A friend loveth at all times.

R Rest — *Psalms 37:7 and Matthew 11:28*

Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

A Affection — *Romans 12:10 and Col 3:2*

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.

G Goodness – *Psalm 23:16 and Zech. 9:17a*
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. For how great is His goodness.

R Rejoicing – *Psalm 19:8*
The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure enlightening the eyes.

A Atonement – *Romans 10b and 11*
Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.

N Name – *John 15:16*
Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father, in my name, He may give it you.

C Charity – *1 Peter 4:8 and Colossians 3:14*
And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover a multitude of sins. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness

E Endurance – *Matthew 24:13 and James 1:12*
But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

S Service – *Romans 12:1 and Psalm 100:2*

I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Serve the Lord with gladness, come before his presence with singing.

(Scripture taken from King James Version)

Song:
971 SASB *I come to the garden alone*

Thot: The perfume of holiness is instilled in the soul by quiet, intimate communion with the Rose of Sharon.

Reading: Perfume Fragrances
Perfumes are made from the oil of flowers. We read that this special oil is found in different parts of various plants. In jasmine and the rose, it is found in the petals, in the violet, it is both the flowers and the leaves. In lavender, this oil is found only in the newly opened flowers.

Some aromatic plants have only to be touched to release their pent up fragrance. Think of the sweet scented leaves of certain geraniums, or the delicate lemon scented thyme. There are also many varieties of sages or mints to savour. Can it be that we, as people, can make life sweeter for others in some way? For some of us our special fragrance will take the form of kind actions or a few helpful words. Or we might need only to say a quiet, simple prayer for a friend.

Perfume - A Fragrance for life's experiences.



Chorus: (Tune: *Let the Beauty of Jesus be seen in me*)

Let the fragrance of love now be seen in me.

Let me gladly display love's sincerity.

Give me a tender heart, help me now do my part,

Till the fragrance of love be shown through me.

Nina Warren

Quiz: Unscramble these perfumes (*mix up words the way you want*)

Calvin Klein	Obsession
Escape	Eternity
True Love	Red Door
Sunflowers	Perhaps
Sun Moon Stars	Poison
Georgie	Oscar de la Renta
White Diamonds	Black Pearls
Chantilly	Exclamation



Chorus:

396 SASB *Count your blessings*

(Chorus only)

Meditation - The Fragrance of Love

Scripture Reading: 1 John 4:7-12

The leader of a women's meeting used as her theme, 'The Fragrance of Love'. She started by asking the question, 'How does love smell?'

the answers were many and varied. 'Baby powder on a clean baby', 'fresh sheets on a newly made bed', 'goodies just out of the oven' and 'freshly picked flowers'. We are told that all of God's creation has a fragrance. Do you remember the story of Bambi? Bambi's mother would take him to the edge of the clearing, stop him and show him how to check to see if there were any enemies near by. She would stand — silently — lift her head and smell. I am told that an animal can smell danger, fear and a natural enemy.

Does love have a scent? Yes, it does. Keith Miller in his book, '*The Scent of Love*' writes: this strange combination of irrepressible joy and the ability to face calmly the most basic and fearful problems of life, created an aura around the little bunch of Christians. Their aura permeated the air of first-century Palestine. The way they lived together gave off a kind of hunting, spiritual scent, which drew people to them.

There is a story of a town that had a perfume factory on its outskirts. One day a stranger was visiting a restaurant in town and was amazed by the beautiful smell all around him. On inquiring, he learnt that every day at noon, the women from the factory come to town for lunch and bring the fragrance of the perfume with them and the scent was felt all around town.

We are encouraged to give off the scent of love, God's kind of love, not only to our family and friends but to our neighbours as well. Let us love in word and deed, choose the 'most excellent way — for the greatest of these is love'. Remember love is a priceless commodity. It is the only thing you can give away and still keep.

Closing Prayer

How Do You Get It Clean?

Geraldine Watson, Toronto, On.



Name of Group

Home League Group

Active Involvement

Have everyone bring in, literally, their favorite remedy for ring-around-the-collar, answering the question How DO YOU keep your collar clean on your shirts and blouses? Set up the tables in a U shape, so that each person can show what they've brought without having to stand up and present in a way that might make them feel self-conscious.

Main Focus of Group

Fellowship and Praise

Motivation

To find out the secrets from as many people as I possibly can, because I'm having a terrible time trying to keep my collars clean. I have hot flashes and that makes it worse, and I can't be the only one who's dealt with this. I'll bring in my bar of *Linda*, a laundry soap that so far gives me the most, but still not brilliant, success.

Spiritual application

We get very dirty from wear, too. We live in a fallen world, and we spend a lot of time falling. What are the things that soil us? (impure influences, the movies, books, conversations that injure our minds and prevent us from 'living a pure life in our house') What does the promise of God actually mean to us when we have our Bible in one hand and the TV Guide in the other? The Psalmist David asked "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false." Psalm 24: 3-4. Living a clean life will enable us to become the example that God requires.

Song Suggestions

Using the following songs/choruses share in a time of quiet reflection and commitment to live a clean life.

- Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb?
- Tell Me What to do to be Pure
- Walking in White
- Well, I've been to the river, I've been baptized

Conclude with Prayer

Enjoy refreshments and fellowship

God's Promises For You

Gwen Hickman, Toronto, Ontario

Suitable for the beginning of a New Year

Song: SASB 757/TB 197

Standing on the promises

God Hath Not Promised

*God hath not promised skies always blue
Flower strewn pathways all our lives through.
God hath not promised sun without rain
Joy without sorrow, Peace without pain.*

BUT

*God hath promised strength for the day
Rest for the weary, light for the way.
Grace for the trials, help from above
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.*

Annie Johnson Flint

Bright Ring of Words

- *Tarry hard by a promise until God meets you there.* Unknown
- For your God always returns by way of his promise. *Thomas Champness*
- Set the pillow of his promises between your back and the burden. *Samuel Rutherford*

Solo: *Precious Promise God Has Given*
SB# 753

Chorus: of song 755 SASB *All the promises of God are sure.* (tune 202)

Meditation: "God's Promises to You"

- Isaiah 49.16 - *"I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.*
- Genesis 28. 15 - *"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.*

When I had the misfortune to fall and break my hip a new replacement was required. I didn't



realise the long weeks and months it would take for healing. In that period of time a lot of things came to mind that were frustrating, especially things I still wanted to do. At such times we have to stop and thank God for the many blessings we can still enjoy and remember God's precious promises to us.

- Isaiah 4:10 *"I will strengthen you and help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand"*

During the period of my "shut in" days I received many cards, letters, and telephone calls which were helpful during my convalescence. Among them was a scroll from a friend entitled "God's Promises to Gwen" listing twelve wonderful promises which I still read, finding spiritual blessing and inspiration.

- Joshua 1.5 - *"I will never leave you nor forsake you.*
- Zephaniah 3:17 - *"I am with you, I am mighty to save, I will take great delight in you, I will quiet you with my love, I will rejoice over you with singing.*

A story is told of the wrestler Redon Gardner who, after winning a bronze medal in the 2004 Olympics in Athens, took off his shoes, placed them in the centre of the mat and walked away in tears. Through this symbolic act, Gardner announced his retirement from the sport that had defined his life for many years.

From this story we can learn that times of walking away come to all of us which can be emotionally wrenching. A loved one walks away in death, a friend moves away, we leave a job or community and feel as if we have left everything behind. But when we have the Lord we never have to walk into the future alone.

Leviticus 26:12 - *"I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people"*
We read of Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. They walked away and left the heavy burden of slavery, but they also left the security they had known. God told Moses, "My presence will go with you and I will give you rest."

During difficult times our stability comes from the presence and the peace of God. He goes with us so we can walk into the future with confidence. William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army, once said, "All the promises of God are sure if you only believe."

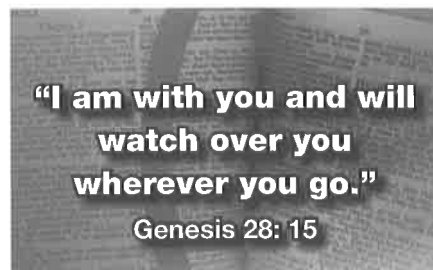
- Psalm 32:7-8 - *"I am your hiding place, I will protect you from trouble and surround you with songs of deliverance. I will instruct and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel and watch over you."*

A thought: "Every loss has a space that only God can fill."

Other promises are: Isaiah 46:4; 41:10; Psalm 9:13; Genesis 28:15; Leviticus 26:12

The songwriter has penned the words: "Precious promise God hath given to the weary passerby, all the way from earth to heaven; I will guide thee with mine eye."

REMEMBER: God's Promises are for You!



Prayer

Dear God, we know that behind every cloud there is a silver lining, so we trust Thee for the assurance that in every dark day when problems arise, your precious promises are there to sustain, bless and meet our need. The Bible tells us that you often use promises to protect and strengthen your people. That doesn't mean that life will be a bed of roses, but when we call upon you in our distress, you hear us. We thank you God that your grace is sufficient to meet all our needs. We pray in Jesus name - Amen.

Activity Item:

Have a box of promises and ask each lady to choose one to read, give a bookmark with a promise printed on it for ladies to take home, or share the significance of a particular promise.

Song of Faith: #85 *More than we can ask*

Final Thought:

*The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures,
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures. John Newton*



Grace to Serve

Robin Maddock - USA Eastern Territory

Program Ideas Focus Activity

To introduce the theme, have the women play a version of musical chairs by passing a small plastic platter. When the music stops, the person holding the platter wins. Give her the option of choosing a prize for herself, (make these prizes appealing) or distributing a bag of smaller prizes to all the women at her table.

At the end of the game, point out that anyone who did not win, but still received a prize experienced grace because of the generosity of one of the other women. Expand on this theme by explaining that everyone who has received salvation has also received God's grace — His unmerited favor.



Song: SASB 254 /Tune 70 *Oh What Amazing Words of Grace*

Sword Drill

The Scriptures listed below mention grace. When the verse is given, the first woman who finds it stands and reads it.

Col. 4:5,6	1 Pet. 4:9,10
2 Cor. 6:1,2	John 1:14-17
Acts 4:33	Acts 6:8

Acts 15:11	Acts 20:24
Rom. 1:15	Rom. 3:22-24
Rom. 5:15-17	Rom. 5:1-3 2
2 Cor. 12:9	Eph. 1:7
Eph. 2:8	2 Thess. 2:16
2 Tim. 1:8-10	Titus 2:11
Titus 3:7,8	Heb. 4:16

Grace Journal

Invite the women to make a grace journal. They can personalize it by adding a cover or decorating it in any way they like. Review the project instructions. Point out that the acrostic G.O.D. can help them to remember their mission.

G - Grace Watch - Receive God's Grace; 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 Identify evidence of God's grace in your daily life.

O - Offer Yourself - Be Full of God's Grace; Colossians 4:5,6. Spend time with God each day. During this time, note new insights He reveals to you.

D-Deeds of Kindness - Faithfully Administering God's Grace; 1 Peter 4:9,10. Each day do one act of kindness. Be sure not to take credit for the deed.

Devotional: Thank God for Grace!

It was a crazy morning; nothing seemed to be going right. Everyone in my house had the flu. Traffic was backed up. I was physically exhausted and it was only Wednesday! "This is great, just great, I'm going to be late!" I fumed in frustration. It was the end of the month, the busiest time for our food pantry, and I knew people would be lined up at the door waiting for me. As I pulled into the church parking lot, I looked at my watch. I was fifteen minutes late. "It could be worse," I thought to myself.

As I opened the door, the office was in full swing and there was a line of people waiting to be seen. The phone was ringing off the hook, and before I could get my coat off, Edna, one of our faithful volunteers, greeted me, "After you've caught your breath can I see you? We have a situation." Her arm was around the shoulder of a young neatly dressed woman who obviously had been crying. I smiled and said, "I'll be right out," and made my way into the office. I knew today was going to take a lot of energy and grace. I took a deep breath and prayed, "God please give me strength and Your grace."

I took Edna's place and sat down next to the woman. "How can I help you?" I asked her. "My name is Cherokee and I don't know where to turn. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) suggested that I come here. On my way here I remembered that this is where my mother would come when she needed help. So many times The Salvation Army gave us food and clothes. My mother took her life last year because of drugs. I don't have anyone now.

It's just me and my little girl, she's seven." The tears began to fall as she spoke. "I was living in a rooming house with some friends. I've finally been able to get an apartment I can afford, but it's empty. I need so much. I don't know where to start. DCF is going to take my little girl if I don't get her a bed, and I need a stove, a refrigerator and chairs." Her voice trembled and her body shook as her tears turned into sobs. At that moment my petty frustrations faded away and God replaced them with His love and grace. "God can get you through this, one step at a time. You'll make it," I assured her.

"We probably can't get everything you need, but there are other resources in the community. We'll figure it out together." She grabbed me around the neck and

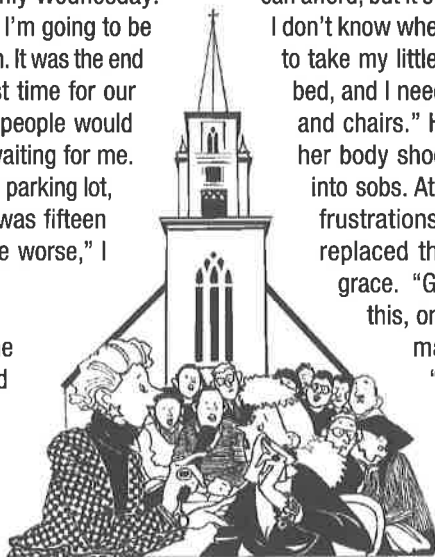
sobbed, "Thank you for helping me, and my mom and me when I was little. I don't feel so alone now."

She hugged me so tightly I could barely breathe. With a lump in my throat, I whispered, "Thank You God for Your grace. For giving me a tender heart and a listening ear. Thank You for those who have faithfully served here in this city in Your name, showing Your love and grace to Cherokee, her mother and to those like her. Please let her mother's death not be in vain. Use us to help her, and more importantly, to lead her to You, I pray. Amen."

Closing Chorus

"Let the Beauty of Jesus," chorus #77
(Substitute the word "grace" for "beauty.")

Prayer and a time of fellowship





Preparation: Decorate the room with “Happy Face” items collected from Thrift Stores and Bargain Shops. Prepare name tags using Happy Face image.

Ask the ladies to wear a “Happy Face” item — suggested articles: Ties; T-shirts; Scarves; Pins; Rings; Necklaces; Bracelets.

Prizes: Winners choose from assorted “Happy Face” items displayed on a table.
Refreshments: Happy Face Cup Cakes served on Happy Face Napkins.

Welcome - A Smile

*A smile is something nice to see
It doesn't cost a cent*

*A smile is something all your own
It never can be spent*

*A smile is welcome anywhere
It does away with frowns*

A smile is good for everyone

To ease life's ups and downs (Anonymous)

Happy Clothes

At the beginning of the meeting, the welcome hostess is dressed with some “Happy Face” items such as a hat, necklace, pin, ring, bracelet, holding a mug/glass, pencil over the ear etc. During the singing of the song “O Happy Day”, all items are taken off and then each person is given a piece of paper and pen, and

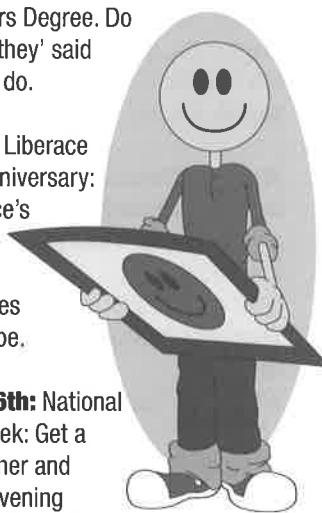
asked to write down as many as they can remember seeing on the hostess.

Song: *O Happy Day that fixed my choice*
SASB 365/Tune 37

Days To Remember

According to Readers Digest, April 2007, April is National Humour Month. Following are some fun holidays to celebrate during the month.

- **April 7th:** National Workplace Napping Day. This is a day for employees to ‘lie down and be counted’ in support of napping on the job.
- **April 12th:** Walk on your Wild Side Day: Go to work dressed in a fun costume, get a Masters Degree. Do something ‘they’ said you’d never do.
- **April 15th:** Liberace Museum Anniversary: Visit Liberace’s collection of pianos, cars, antiques and wardrobe.
- **April 20-26th:** National Karaoke Week: Get a group together and spend the evening singing your favourite songs.



Chorus: *Happiness is to know the Saviour*

Happy Items

Each person shares about the “Happy Face” item they are wearing.

Happy Faces on the Internet

On the internet there are thousands of sites

under "Happy Face". (look up information on the internet and share — following are some that I used)

- The First Happy Face
- The Happy-face spiders
- The Happy Face Crater on Mars
- Women Put On a Happy Face

Happy Thoughts

Have a "Happy Face" container with "jokes" in. Each member takes one out and reads it. These can be found in magazines, Readers Digest, local papers. etc.

Happy Times

Have each person share a very special "happy time" in their life.

What puts a smile on your face today?

What is the funniest TV show/movie you have watched?

What is the funniest book you have read?

Happy Reminders

Have numerous "Happy Face" items on a tray. Allow a few minutes to memorize the items, then cover them, ask the ladies write down as many as they can remember.

Song: *Happy the home when God is there*
SASB 661/Tune 86

Meditation: What's in a Smile

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 15:13,15. "A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but

heartache crushes the spirit. All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast."

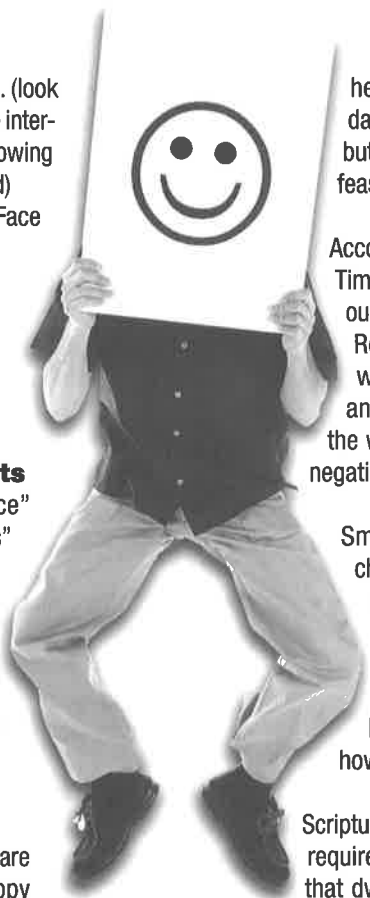
According to an article in the New York Times, there is a relationship between our facial expressions and our moods. Researchers found that saying the word "cheese" prompted a smile and pleasant feelings, while saying the word "frow" resulted in a frown and negative emotions.

Smiling isn't the only way we can change the way we feel. Our attitude is important too. We can't always control what happens to us, but we can choose our attitude in every situation. We can choose how we react, what we say and how we say it.

Scripture reminds us that having happiness requires us to fill our minds with thoughts that dwell on the good things of life, because, whatever we put into our minds will determine what comes out in our words and actions. Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:8 to fill our minds with thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. When we do this, we will have good attitudes, good responses, good actions. Let's decide to have a positive attitude — take time to smile at someone by sharing a kind word.

Song: *There is sunshine in my soul today*
SASB 387/Tune 830

Prayer & Refreshments



October Walks

Marjorie Johnstone, Barrie, Ontario

Song: *I have found a great salvation*
SASB 328 - Tune 754



Of all the months of the year October is my favorite for getting outside and walking. The air is so crisp and clean, the ground is usually dry and there are no mosquitoes.

In the community where I was raised there are a lot of forested areas. I have spent many happy hours simply wandering through them, sometimes alone, at other times accompanied by my family. The coloured leaves add a beautiful glow to the world around us. The squirrels and chipmunks scurry around storing up a supply of food for the winter ahead. Chickadees flit around the trees nearby, while a blue jay shrieks across the sky. You get the feeling that this was the way God intended the world to be. The peace and a sense of His presence refreshes us. It is such a beautiful change from the fast pace of daily life.

For a few moments I would like for us to consider OUR WALK THROUGH LIFE.

Scripture: ...Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient path, ask where the good way is, and walk in it..."
Jeremiah 6: 16.

A Leisurely Walk

When we take a leisurely walk we have time to appreciate the things around us. We can learn so much from what we see and are experiencing. We can also take time to share with the people we meet along the way.

We can imagine Jesus taking leisurely walks talking and teaching his disciples. Pointing



to the lilies in the fields, the birds in the air and strolling the amazing vineyards. These walks no doubt had a profound impact on the disciples as they reflected on the beauty of creation while being refreshed in the soul. A quiet time with the Lord offers refreshment, peace and real joy of living when we take a nature walk.

Solo: "In the Garden"



The Hurried Walk

Hurry seems to be the trend for everything. Everyone rushes around, trying to accomplish as much as possible. We often fail to stop long enough to see if what we are doing is really so important. Are we effectively serving the Lord in the way He has planned? May we take time to listen and learn as we go. The hymn writer says, "Take time to be holy." Another line says,

"And run not before Him whatever betide."
(Quotations from Song 345 (T.B. 685).

The Uphill Walk

People who have never lived in hilly country have never really experienced an uphill walk. Those who have done any hill-climbing know how hard it can be. Each step takes effort and the higher you climb the more effort it takes. Life, for many people, seems to be uphill all the way. We need to always remember the promise found in Isaiah 40: 31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." We just need to claim that promise and keep going.



The Valley Walk

As we travel life's road we all have the experience of finding ourselves in the valley. Some are very deep, some are densely forested and dark. Sometimes these experiences can become overwhelming. The Psalmist reminds us, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." We need to learn to turn our eyes away from the shadows that lie ahead and practice looking up. It is then we realize that the trip through

the valley can bring us to another mountaintop.

Chorus: "Climb, Climb Up
Sunshine Mountain"



Walk with a Companion

Invite a friend to walk with you. A shared experience is so much richer providing many treasured memories. Picture, in your mind, the walk to Emmaus. As the men journeyed and talked of recent events, they were joined by the Lord Himself. What a difference His presence made to their walk!

Walk with a Purpose

Aimless drifting leads us nowhere. Our minds, as well as our bodies become sluggish. We need to set out with a purpose, whether it be a path of learning or an avenue of service, always alert to the opportunities that present themselves. Keeping our purpose in mind, we should avoid being sidetracked. We sometimes sing a chorus which says, "I have decided to follow Jesus, NO TURNING BACK".

Have a Destination

Not only should we have a purpose for walking, but we should have an ultimate goal.

We have all had the experience of going on vacation with the purpose of visiting friends, family, sightseeing, or just getting away from routine for a few days. We have also had the experience of heading for home again. Remember how we started counting the miles as we got closer to our destination? How we looked forward to the end of our journey! I pray that we are all on the road which leads home. The Lord has promised a mansion at the end of the journey.

Conclusion: Close with prayer, refreshments and fellowship



Sisters Are Special

Gwen Hickman, Toronto, Ontario

**"All of the gifts life sends us
The big ones and the small
The gift of a loving sister
Is one of the greatest of them all"**

Idea: Ask ladies to invite their spiritual sister to join them for the meeting.

Song: (T.B.565)

*We're part of the family that's been born
again,
We're part of the family whose love knows
no end,
For Jesus has saved us and made us His own,
We're part of a family that's on the way home.*

*When sisters meet sorrow, we all feel their
grief,
When they've passed through the valley
we all feel relief,
Together in sunshine, together in rain,
Together in victory through His precious
name.*

*Though some go before us, we'll all
meet again,
Just inside the city, as we enter in,
There'll be no more parting, with Jesus
we'll be
Together forever, God's family.*

Prayer:

"Father: Open our ears to hear what you are saying to us in the things that happen to us and in the people we meet.

Open our eyes to see the needs of the people around us.

Open our hands to do our work well, to help when help is needed

Open our lips to tell others the good news of Jesus and bring comfort, happiness and laughter to other people.

Open our minds to discover new truths about you and the world

Open our hearts to love you and others as you have loved us in Jesus. AMEN

Special Feature:

Have two spiritual sisters share the joys and challenges in their journey with Christ.

Poem

I'm so glad to have a sister
With a loving heart and a hand to lend
She's much more to me than a sister
She's my closest and dearest friend.
When my burdens seem so heavy
And too much for me to bear
She is there for me to lean upon
With a shoulder that I can share.

I'm so glad to have a sister
I thank God for her each day
It's not often that I tell her
I'm so glad she came my way
"But sister you're the best there is
A special link in our family tree."
I hope I can be the kind of sister to you
That you have been to me.

(Edith Forsey)

Acrostic: "S-I-S-T-E-R"

S is for the moral support that a sister willingly gives.

I is for the interest she shows to her family, relatives and friends.

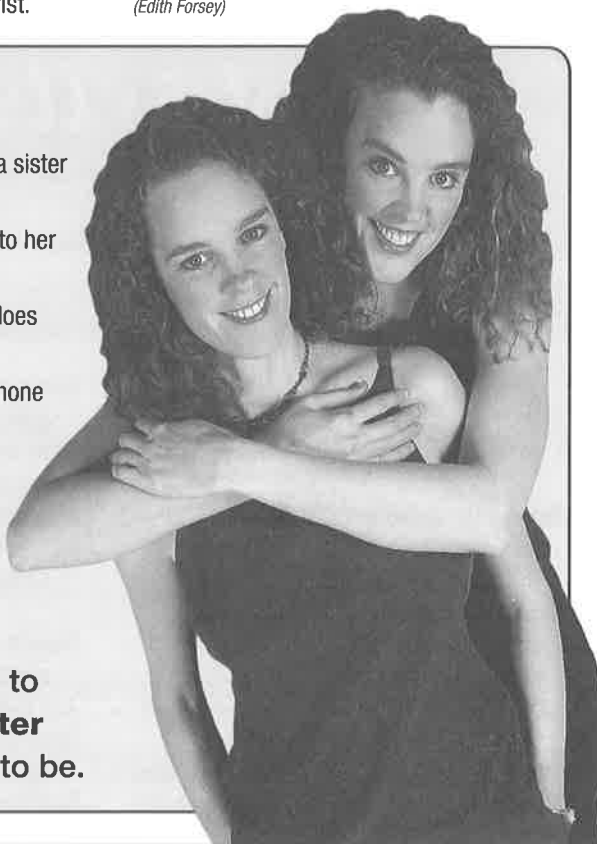
S is for the special things she does without complaining.

T is for the time she takes to phone and see how you are doing.

E is for the extra advice she gives to those who need it.

R is for the respect she has to say nothing, and sometimes remain quiet.

**Let's try our best to
be the kind of sister
God would want us to be.**





Chorus:

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed
by His blood.
Joint-heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, the family of God."

Solo: *O what a wonderful, wonderful day.*
SASB 371

Devotional – Luke 10:38

Bible Sisters – Mary and Martha

Sisters really are special. They are an important link in the family chain. She is there to laugh with, to cry with, and to share your joys and sorrows. She is always there with a helping hand, an encouraging word, a friendly smile, and a loving, caring heart. These qualities make a sister special.



We often refer to ourselves as sisters in Christ. Therefore we consider ourselves a part of a family, God's family. We have a close bond that holds us together.

May we be the sister God wants us to be,
always wearing a friendly smile, and giving
an encouraging word. Let's thank God for the
gift of a sister, and each day show her how
much we appreciate her.

All of the gifts life sends us
The big ones and the small
The gift of a loving sister
Is one of the greatest of them all.

Song: *Help us to help each other, Lord.*
SASB 662/Tune 82

Closing Thought:

"There's a bond between
us sisters,
A closeness and friendship we share;
It's a heart-to-heart
understanding,
A love that will always
be there."

**Closing prayer, refreshment
and fellowship**

“Walk Awhile In My Shoes”

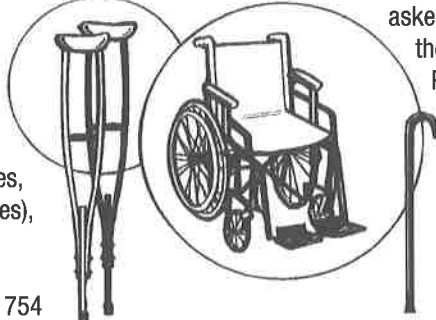
Cathie Harris, Winnipeg, MB

Goal:

To promote empathy and greater understanding of those with mobility problems. To make a special effort to invite and transport seniors and those with mobility difficulties and make it a special time for them.

Decor

Footprints cut out of cardboard leading from doorway into meeting place. Crutches, canes (actual or pictures), wheelchairs.



Song: SASB 328/TB 754
“When We Walk With The Lord”

Prayer: (Ask someone ahead of time so their prayer can fit in with the theme.)

Game: Have some volunteers participate in a 3-legged race — stress how our mobility is hampered in a fun way.

Film: Walk Awhile In My Shoes

(National Film Board No. 106C 0174 596 - 27 min. 5 sec.)

Discussion:

Get reactions to the film by asking such questions as:

- How did you feel about what you saw?
- Any new attitudes or new awareness?
- Especially encourage the special guests to share from their perspectives.
- Share any ways we can be of help.

Devotional:

Base it on Luke 24: 13-35

“Jesus himself came up and walked with them.”
Expand on these “seed thoughts”:

Two people were walking and talking — sharing the events of their recent past and how it had affected them. Then a man came to join them whose identity they did not know. He asked questions, entered into their experience with them. Perhaps he saw that they had been “emotionally immobilized” by the death of Jesus of Nazareth. He sought to understand them, as he walked with them and then gave words of enlightenment and encouragement.

Each one of us has “mobility” problems if we are honest — be they physical, emotional or spiritual. Jesus draws near and walks with us — entering into our experience with us. And thus He brings His healing presence.

SOLO: “Jesus Himself Drew Near”

As soloist sings, ask each one to picture Jesus drawing near to their particular need and walking with them.

Closing Song: “O Man Of Galilee”
SASB 592/T.B. 726

Benediction:

May the Man of Galilee draw near to you just now and walk with you in these coming days.

From Stress to Peace

Michelle Mercer, Spryfield, Maritimes

Welcome:

Welcome ladies with the soothing sounds of a quiet instrumental CD and with dim lighting or candlelight if appropriate. Set up a worship centre with a pillow and blanket to reflect a peaceful rest.



Prepare a focus table displaying items that may be helpful in dealing with stress such as a basket filled with bath products, Magic Bags, a few Christian novels, a journal, a pair of running shoes, a Bible. Some of these items may be used as door prizes. Ladies may be given small packages of bath soak, etc. as favors.

What is stress?

"The feeling you get when your gut says "No" and your mouth says, "Yes, I'd be glad to."

(PastorNet.Com)

While stress does involve events and our response to them, these are not the most important factors. Our thoughts about the situations in which we find ourselves are the critical factor. When something happens to us, we automatically evaluate the situation mentally. We decide if it is threatening to us, how we need to deal with the situation, and what skills we can use. If we decide that the demands of the situation outweigh the skills we have, then we label the situation as "stressful" and react with the classic "stress response". If we decide that our coping skills

outweigh the demands of the situation, then we don't see it as "stressful".

(Canadian Mental Health Association)

Relaxation Exercises:

Take a few moments to introduce ladies to these helpful tools in coping with stress or invite a massage therapist to speak to your group and share some helpful coping strategies and relaxation techniques.

- Breathing Exercises
- Neck Muscle Stretches
- Arm & Shoulder Stretches

Song: 'Mid All The Traffic Of The Ways SASB 615/Tune 86

Selected Scripture:

Psalm 91:1-2, Matthew 11:28-30, John 14:27

Devotional

Thoughts:

From Stress to Peace

Based On Matthew 11:28-29

Jesus was God living in a human body and as such He was fully aware of the fatigue that can settle in both physically, emotionally and spiritually. Jesus pulled himself aside from the needy multitudes on a number of occasions in order to find rest for His body and spirit.

The demands
of the situation
outweigh the skills
we have, then we
label the situation
as "stressful"

As Jesus speaks to the crowds on this occasion He recognizes the toll that striving in this world can take upon people and the stress that can result. Many in the crowd are weary from struggling to keep the Law and find that the inner peace they long for is so elusive. The burden of sin and a guilty conscience may weigh heavily on others.



quiet rest they desperately needed and they resisted. But then there were times when they came to you, nestled down in your arms, cuddled in close and rested in the safety of your embrace. This rest restored their strength and renewed their bodies.

Enters the Master with an invitation that no one else can give and follow through with. "Give me your burden," he says, "and I will give you rest." There can be no better exchange ever offered. Rest replaces weariness as Jesus helps lift the burdens.

Jesus' invitation to us is very similar. He longs for us to give up resisting. He longs for us to turn to him, nestle in His loving arms and rest in the safety and security of His embrace. Whatever wearies us today and whatever burdens us down can be given over to Him and in exchange we can receive the spiritual rest our souls so desperately needs and find the secret of moving from stress to peace.

"Give me your burden," he says, "and I will give you rest."

Life brings its share of challenges to everyone and therein lies the potential for all of us to become weary and burdened. Exhaustion knocks at the door of our bodies and soul from time to time and we must choose how we will respond. Many choose to push on until both body and soul crashes. Some, however, choose to respond to Jesus' gentle call — "Come to me and I will give you rest." When we allow ourselves to relax in the goodness and promises of God, then the rest Jesus offers comes naturally.

Many of you are mothers and you probably recall times when your children were so tired and yet so unwilling to give in and find the rest their little bodies needed. Perhaps you tried everything in your power to woo them to the

Prayer

Dealing With Stress: Practical Helps

Signs and Symptoms

- Changes in your body
- Changes in your thinking
- Changes in your emotions
- Changes in your actions

The U.S. National Mental Health Association

- When something worries you, don't bottle it up — talk it out with someone you trust.
- Work off anxiety and anger — do something constructive with the pent-up energy. Pitch into some physical activity or take a brisk walk.

- Take a few of your most urgent tasks and pitch into them — take one thing at a time, setting the rest aside for the time being.
- If you feel yourself worrying about yourself all the time, try doing something for someone else.



Bob Hope International Heart Research Institute

- If you face an unpleasant task, get it over with early in the day rather than allowing it to consume your thoughts throughout the day.
- Consider that for everything that goes wrong, there are 5 to 100 blessings. Count them.
- If you can't do anything about a situation, forget it.
- Before you say anything, ask yourself if what you are about to say is true, kind or necessary.
- Take a brisk 30-minute walk or try some other aerobic exercise as an instant cure for most stress.
- Do at least one thing you enjoy everyday.
- Always remember the best "things" in life are not even things.

**Do at least one thing
you enjoy everyday**

Other helpful resources may be found at the Canadian Mental Health Association's Website www.cmha.ca

Female Stress Diet

This is a specially formulated diet, designed to help you cope with the stress that builds up during the day:

Breakfast

- 1 Grapefruit
- 1 Slice whole wheat toast
- 1 cup skim milk

Lunch

- Small portion lean, steamed chicken
- 1 cup of spinach
- 1 cup herbal tea
- 1 Chocolate biscuit

Afternoon Tea

- The rest of the biscuits in the packet
- 1 tub of Rocky Road Ice Cream with Chocolate Topping

- 1 jar Nutella

Dinner

- 4 bottles of coke
- 2 loaves Garlic Bread
- 1 family size Supreme Pizza
- 3 Snickers bars



Late Night Snack

Whole frozen Sarah Lee Cheesecake (eaten directly from the freezer)

Female Stress Diet

- If no one sees you eat something, it has no calories.
- When drinking a diet coke with a chocolate bar, the fat in the chocolate bar is cancelled out by the diet coke.
- When you eat with someone else, calories don't count if you do not eat more than they do.
- Food used for medical purposes does NOT count (for example: hot chocolate, toast, cheesecake).



- If you fatten up the people around you, you will look thinner.
- Cinema related foods have a zero calorie count as they are part of the entertainment package and not counted as food intake.
- Biscuit pieces have no calories because breaking the biscuits up causes calorie leakage.
- Food licked from knives and spoons do not contain fat if you are in the process of cooking something.
- Foods that are the same color have the same amount of fat. Examples are: spinach and peppermint ice cream, apples and red jelly candy.

- Chocolate is like a food-color wild card and may be substituted for any other color.
- Anything eaten while standing has no calories due to gravity and the density of the calorie mass.
- Food consumed from someone else's plate has no fat as it rightfully belongs to the other person and will cling to his/her plate (oh, how fat likes to cling)!

And remember: STRESSED SPELT BACKWARDS IS DESSERTS! *Source: Crosswalk.Com*

LAUGH! LAUGH!
LAUGH! LAUGH!
The Best Medicine

Laughter: Always the Best Medicine

These bloopers actually appeared in printed Church bulletins. Enjoy and have a laugh.

- The outreach committee has enlisted 25 volunteers to make calls on people who are not afflicted with any church.
- The pastor would appreciate if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday morning.
- For those who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- This morning's Stewardship Offertory: "Jesus Paid It All."
- Weight Watchers will meet at 7PM at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double doors at the side entrance.
- The Senior Choir invites any member who enjoys sinning to join the choir.
- Eight new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

The 'Rest' Is God's

Joy Hunt, Newfoundland West adapted by Gwen Hickman

Preparation:

Create a display using items that will help you feel relaxed. A water fountain along with some candles will bring a calming effect that will help the body prepare for rest. Add to the atmosphere of the evening some quiet music.



Introduction:

In this world everything is done at such a crazy fast pace that we find it difficult to rest. At the end of the day it is great to put on a pair of pyjamas and prepare our bodies for rest. God desires that we rest in Him, body, mind and spirit. Let us allow God to speak to us, and we to Him as we reflect on resting in His arms, because the 'REST' is God's.

Song: Happy We who Trust in Jesus
SASB 722/TB416

Prayer Chorus: I know he cares for me

Share with the women the words of Song 673 – "Now the day is over".

Quiz: Bible or Songbook

Ladies have to guess whether the phrase is found in the Bible or The Salvation Army songbook.

- O'er Bethlehem it took its rest
SASB 90
- The rest of the sick on the island
Bible: Acts 28:9
- So on the seventh day He Rested
Bible: Genesis 2:2

- A rest upon the way - SASB 476
- And I will give you rest - Bible: Matthew 11:28
- I come to thee for rest - SASB 284
- Are you still sleeping and resting?
Bible: Matthew 26:4
- They shall never enter my rest
Bible: Hebrews 3:11
- Let thy blessing rest on me
SASB 474
- Your unfailing love rest upon us
Bible: Psalm 33:22

Chorus of Song 94: Prayer gently lifts me to highest heaven

Game: Unscramble Words

DBE	BED
TCO	COT
SSTTEARM	MATTRESS
TEKNALB	BLANKET
EETHS	SHEET
RRILLOTSE	STROLLER
OORDBEM	BEDROOM
DDBYAE	DAYBED
KBBUDNE	BUNKBED
EELSPGNIGBA	SLEEPING BAG

Scripture: Philippians 4: 4-7

Devotional: "Soul Rest "

Matthew 11: 28 – 30

Statistics say that 90% of people are not getting enough rest. That is physical rest. There is no statistic on spiritual rest. For six days God made the numerous things on the earth, on the seventh He rested and realized that all was good. Rest of soul is an amazing provision for God's children yet we fail to experience it to its fullest.



A son wanted to move out on his own, away from the family home. Although he was of age, mom and dad wanted him to stay at home for a little longer. The young man thought he was old enough to spend the next 48 to 50 hours on a bus, crossing four provinces, to live with friends. Mom and dad had no choice but to let him go.

They had prayed to the Lord God Almighty to keep their son at home, but soon realized He (God) was telling them, I will protect the child wherever he goes. The parents thought they had faith and trust in God, but during the first 24 hours their son was gone, they were fretting and worrying and lost a night's sleep. They realized how hard, stressful and tiresome this was making them.

Then the Lord spoke to them through a verse in Matthew 11:28. *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.* They realised at this time that they were weary and tired because they hadn't left the care of their son fully in the hands of the Almighty. They said the words, but didn't fully trust in His grace.

With a quiet prayer they put the care of their son into the hands of the Master of all creation. Trusting Him to not only keep him safe until he got to his destination, but also to instruct, protect and give him all he required to help him start a life of independence. At this time they felt the Holy Spirit move over them giving them rest and peace.

The Psalmist expressed in Psalm 62:1 "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him". When our hearts and minds are quiet in the presence of God there is complete rest of the soul. In today's world of technology and fast pace we are much too busy trying to solve our own worries and problems to realise that we should be still, and trust God to help us carry our worries and burdens.

The words of the old song, Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour? Do you rest each moment in the Crucified? Speak of burdens being lifted and made easier if only we would, Be still and let God help us.

We are encouraged to TRUST the heart of God in quietness and rest.

Final Thought:

Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?
Are you walking daily by the Saviour's side?
Do you rest each moment in the Crucified?

Closing Prayer



Our group looks forward each year to our Thanksgiving progressive dinner. Normally we go to three different homes for the traditional food and fellowship. Why not try something different for a change? Try a Progressive Prayer Dinner.

In the first home, instead of warming up to tasty appetizers, the hostess would provide a pot of chicken broth then invite everyone to join hands and pray for the millions who are hungry, and for those who continue to live in emotional and spiritual poverty.

The next stop would usually be the soup and a salad course instead, gather in the garage where a bowl of rice is placed on the concrete floor. The purpose here is to highlight the plight of



thousands of brothers and sisters in Christ who, at this particular time are suffering imprisonment, torture or even death for His name sake. Pray about persecuted Christians and ask God to remind Christians to pray regularly for them.

Finally, move on to the next home for an elaborate turkey dinner with all the trimmings.

In light of the previous stops, prayer around the table should centre around God's abundance in our own country. Thank Him for His mercy and grace. Ask him to help us to be better stewards of His blessings.

A progressive prayer dinner, reflecting on God's goodness and grace can be a humbling experience as well as a new way to think about Thanksgiving.

5 Creative Thanksgiving Celebrations

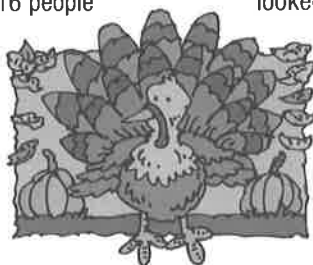


When you think of Thanksgiving, what typically comes to mind? If you're like most people, it's food, family and football. While these three means of celebration can be great, every now and then you just want to mix things up. So why not borrow one of these creative Thanksgiving celebration ideas

events that usually overpower our holidays, I enjoyed spending time in the company of friends, and the beauty of God's creation.

Turkey and Bowl

Once we've sufficiently recovered from our traditional Thanksgiving dinner, our family heads to the local bowling alley. We've had as few as 4 and as many as 16 people bowl together. We laugh, compete, and come home even more thankful for the joys of family.



Garland of Prayer

A few years ago, several loved ones were going through tough times at the holidays. So, on Thanksgiving, I wrote their names and needs on strips of red and green construction paper to make a garland for our tree. Over the next month, one of the kids picked a slip of paper at dinner each night and we all prayed for that person. Then we'd add that strip of paper to the garland. By Christmas we already were hearing wonderful reports of answered prayer!

A Walk to Remember

A few years ago, I was invited, by friends to share in a Thanksgiving morning hike. During the drive to where we were to commence our walk we shared stories and enjoyed listening to music; then we spent a few hours hiking and savoring nature. Instead of the fast-paced

Trivial Pursuit

One Thanksgiving I gathered a family tree and write-ups of special family memories into a folder. Throughout the day, relatives

looked through it to learn about their ancestors and shared additional memories. Then "contestants" in our Who Wants to Be a Millionaire type game answered trivia questions about our family to win prizes. At the close of our celebration, we thanked

God for a fun time and his blessings on our family through the years.

Do it yourself Psalm

One Thanksgiving I asked everyone one to write down something God had done for them the previous year. We read these aloud and then recited a phrase from Psalm 136: "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever." It sounded something like this: "He helped me pass my math class. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever." "Even though I got laid off and I'm still looking for a job, God's provided everything I need. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His loves endures forever." Giving thanks became real for us that year.



Think outside the square you live in!



Roylene Maynard, adapted from *Working with Women Australia Eastern Territory*

Preparation:

Print individual sentence prayers on traditional Christmas shapes, e.g. tree, star, Santa, snowman, snowflake.



Have one sheet of colored paper for each lady. Draw a 10cm square in the centre. Also, a copy of the Outside suggestions, and poem, step Outside for each. Have a number of scissors, and glue sticks or sticky tape handy.

Introduction:

Family Christmas traditions. Every family has traditions that have special meaning. Allow time for the ladies to share and feel encouraged by the ideas of others.

Prayer: Ladies to read out their sentence prayers



My Favorite Carol:

Choose one or more ladies to speak about an old favorite, and then sing it. Others to speak about a more modern carol. E.g. *Mary's Boy Child, When a child is born*, either sing or listen to it. (Origins of carols are readily available on the Internet, if needed)

Competition:

- It is customary to exchange kisses under a spring of which plant? (*Mistletoe*)
- How many sides does a snowflake have? (*6*)
- In what language does Noel mean Christmas? (*French*)
- What were the very first Christmas tree decorations? (*Fruits*)
- Which 2 N.T. books of the Bible record the birth of Jesus? (*Matthew & Luke*)
- The world's largest Christmas cracker (bon-bon) was made and pulled in which country? (*Australia*)
- What is the biggest selling Christmas single of all time? (*White Christmas*)
- Which country has a city named Santa Claus? (*USA*)
- Counting Rudolph, how many reindeer are there? (*9*)
- Which Christmas song contains the line: Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation?
(*O come all ye faithful*)



Devotions:

Think or step outside the square you live in. What does it mean? It simply means to ... GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE!

Why would we want to do that?

Because Jesus did.

- John 4:5-10 (Woman at the well: traditional taboos)
- Luke 10:30-37 (Good Samaritan: ritual cleanliness)

- Matthew 5:43-44 (Love and forgiveness: Jewish teaching)

Even though Jesus grew up observing Jewish law, His life and ministry showed that He was willing to step outside the norm when it became necessary. He showed His followers that it was more important to BE what God wanted them to be, then to do what man expected them to do.

Jesus whole life was an example of this



Jesus stepped outside the square (left His comfort zone) for us on that first Christmas Day, dare we do the same.

Quiet Reflection:

Choose a Christmas carol and take a few minutes to listen to the words and music. Invite the ladies to "Be still before the Lord".

Listen to His voice speak to their hearts and conclude with a time of silent prayer.



(Philippians 2:1-8) Jesus, King of Creation, left the glory of Heaven to live on earth as a man. This is the message of Christmas: God lived with man, so man could live with God.

Because others need it.

At Christmas time many of us tend to be almost selfish in that we concentrate mainly on our own families needs and plans, often forgetting the many people for whom this season brings loneliness, sadness and need.

Outside suggestions:

- Purposefully make a new friend, befriend a lonely person.
- Buy/make a gift for someone you do not get on with.
- Surprise neighbours with Christmas cards.
- Visit an elderly person and ask about Christmas long ago (and really listen)
- Phone a forgotten relative
- Renew a friendship, mend a relationship
- Baby-sit for free for a young Mom, delight the child with your time and interest
- Discuss the meaning of Christmas with a teenager.
- Leave an anonymous food hamper at a needy house.



Poem: Step Outside

*Think outside the square that you live in,
Step outside and take a leap of faith.
Push aside the trappings of tradition
Just long enough to gaze at Jesus face.
For as you stand and look into the stable
Containing such a treasure in this Child,
You'll see the King of Glory straight from heaven,
And much more than a baby meek and mild.
For Jesus left the square that He lived in,
For you He stepped outside His comfort zone.
For you He traded glory for a manger,
So He could one day take you to his throne.
So, step outside the square that you live in,
Take a risk and follow Jesus lead*



Ladies cut and glue the suggestions outside the square on their paper. Encourage them to think about ways in which they could step "outside" their square" this Christmas.

Prayer:

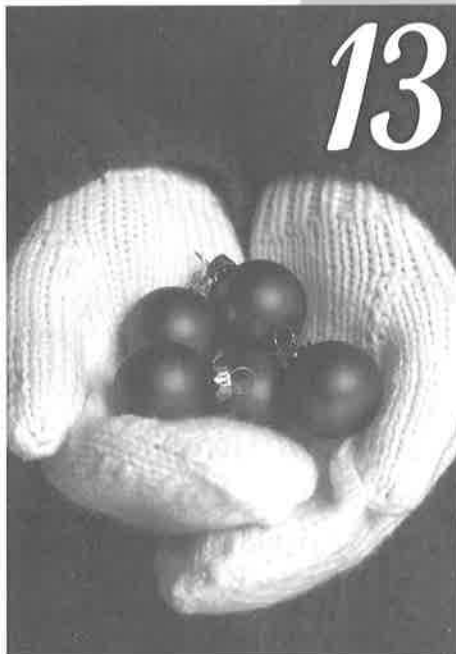
For courage to not only think, but also to step outside our square.





- Do something unexpected for your neighbours.
- Write a letter you have been meaning to write for a long time.
- Welcome every guest, including the paper boy, by letting them choose a small gift from a basket in your front hall or from a small gift-laden tree.

- Use a theme to decorate your home or the Seniors Club centre; such as, peppermint stick theme, snowflake theme, 12 days of Christmas, Nativity theme.



13

ways to have a more meaningful Christmas

Southern Africa Territory

- Make a prayer calendar from this year's Christmas cards so you will remember to pray for your friends throughout the year.
- Have a block "Tree Trimming Party" at your home. Deliver the invitation with an ornament with the guest's name on it for them to bring to the party. After the tree is trimmed have a sharing time, "What Christmas means to me" as you have refreshments.
- Choose a needy family and give them a box of groceries or some home baking.
- If you have a real tree, when you are finished with it, remove two branches and form a cross which can be used at Easter time. The tree which was used to announce His birth, now reminds us of His love for us in His sacrifice on the Cross.



- Make up some TV dinners to take to a shut-ins.



- Have an old-fashioned taffy-pull with a few friends.
- If you buy a practical gift for a child, tuck in a surprise; such as a loonie, a tiny doll, toy car etc.
- For a relative who lives far make a monthly recording to send on a tape cassette, a gift to enjoy all year.

- Determine to sit quietly several times during the Season and read Luke's recording of the birth of Christ.





The Lord's Prayer **A Model of Creative Prayer for evening fellowship**

Invoke community churches to join for this occasion

'As I prayed the Lord's Prayer this morning, I was joining with the voices of millions around the world who pray in this way each day. It is such a complete prayer that it seems to reach all peoples at all times in all places.' (Richard Foster)

Worship

'Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.'

Jesus teaches his disciples that prayer starts with worship. Long before our list of requests begins, we need to take time to remember who God is and what he has done for us. Expressing thanks and praise is an exercise in discipline.

Make a Praise Wall

Hand out newspapers asking each person in the group to tear out 'bad

news' - stories which identify problems in our world. Invite them to stick these pieces of newspaper all over a wall.

Next, give each person several sheets of coloured paper and ask them to write one characteristic (e.g. faithful) or name of God (e.g. Mighty Deliverer) on each sheet. Encourage participants to stick the coloured sheets over the bad news stories. They may wish to attach their sheet over a relevant story.

Make a Joyful Noise

Ask everyone to think of one thing they love about Jesus. Then challenge them to make their way quickly around the room sharing this quality and listening to everyone else's choices. Initially it will sound like deafening noise, but you will begin to recognize and hear specific words of praise. In a room of 20 people almost 400 proclamations of praise

***'Our Father,
who art in Heaven,
hallowed be
thy name.'***

will be spoken in just a few seconds.

Make an Altar

In the Old Testament, we read of God's people building altars as acts of remembrance. These altars reminded the people of God's past goodness and deliverance.

Give each person a stone and invite them to write a message or word of thanksgiving on it. Have everyone come forward and place their stone in a pile at the front. Throughout the rest of the meeting (or prayer week) leave the stones as a reminder of God's faithfulness.

Dreaming

'Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.'

'Prayer infuses the air of a time yet to be, into the suffocating atmosphere of the present. History belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being.' (Walter Wink)

'The great tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer but unoffered prayer.' (F. B. Meyer)

To pray is an invitation to dream. Many of us simply don't ask God for things because we cannot imagine how those things could ever come to pass. We are discouraged and exhausted by the realities we see around us. We don't ask because we assume situations can't change.

In this section of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus issues the thrilling challenge to start dreaming again. He invites us to imagine what God's Kingdom will be like and to call it into our present reality through the awesome power of prayer. We are to expect Heaven on earth!

Awaken Dreams

Give everyone access to paper and drawing or painting materials. Ask them to draw or paint a picture of what their church or community would look like if their dreams came true. Encourage them to be bold. When everyone has finished, lay the pictures out where everyone can see them. Our dreams are God-given, so spend some time asking God to make them into reality.

Dreams die when people walk away from God. There are few things more painful than praying that a loved-one will return to God, but seeing no result. Yet the Father goes on waiting and prodigals do come home (see Luke 15:11-32).

Give everyone a small piece of paper and ask them to write on it the name of one person who they would love to see return to God. Create a focal point (eg a cross, a door, the mercy seat) and invite people to bring their paper to this central place. Encourage people to keep praying for these people, believing dreams will become a reality.

***'Thy Kingdom
come, thy will
be done on earth,
as it is in Heaven.'***

Getting Personal

***'Give us this day our
daily bread, and forgive
us our trespasses, as
we forgive those who
trespass against us.'***

'If we were not so familiar with the Lord's Prayer, we would be astonished at the petition for daily bread. If it had come from the lips of any other than Jesus himself, we would consider it an intrusion of materialism upon the refined realm of prayer. But here it is smack in the middle of the greatest of prayers.' (Richard Foster)

It is one of the wonders of our faith that Almighty God loves to answer the smallest,

seemingly most insignificant prayers we can bring. Jesus taught his disciples to bring their personal needs to God. Instead of getting by in the small things and only troubling him with serious issues, we are actively encouraged to bring our mundane and ordinary requests to him. Independence is not a highly-prized quality in the Kingdom.

Getting personal, however, is not just about our material needs. It is also about our spiritual and emotional well-being. It is about repentance and forgiveness. It is God's holiness invading and cleansing our souls.

For many of us, these deeply personal and intimate times with God can prove difficult. It can be hard to put our innermost thoughts and feelings into words. It may even be intensely

'Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.'

painful to articulate certain things. It is in these situations that creative prayer truly comes into its own. A symbolic action can often express what words cannot. Doing something physical can seal a decision or commitment which has been made in the heart. The actions themselves are often simple, but the impact can be profound.

Build a Prayer Wall

One of the most popular and enduring creative prayer activities is the prayer wall. This involves covering a wall in paper and leaving pens nearby. People are invited to write or draw their prayer needs on the wall. Others can see their requests and pray for them. If

the wall is left in place for a longer period of time, people can add their answers to prayer as they come. If a wall is not available, the same exercise can be done using a book.

Eat and Drink

The act of eating and drinking is profoundly symbolic. It symbolises receiving from God, being nourished, and having our basic needs satisfied, symbolising tasting God's goodness (Psalm 34:8).



Place a bowl of fruit or sweets on a table. Invite each person to take one. As they eat, encourage them to think about God's goodness and faithfulness and to entrust to him their daily needs.

Drowning Burdens

Place a bucket of water in the room. Give everyone a stone and have each person hold their stone feeling its weight and coldness.

Imagine the stone as a personal burden or challenge. Give time to contemplate the significance of their burden. Have them bring their stone to the bucket of water and drop it in. This simple action encourages us to let go of everything that weighs us down and receive God's peace.



Alternatively, with water-soluble ink, write on a stone something for which you need forgiveness. On contact with the water the writing will be erased. Releasing the stone into the water recognizing God's forgiveness.

'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

Stick to the Cross

Create a cross out of wood or cardboard. Fill a bucket or bowl with glue. Invite participants to write on paper the things they need to have forgiven in their lives. Ask them to dip the paper into the glue and stick it to the cross. Some types of glue (e.g. PVA glue) will dissolve the ink. When the paper dries, it will be blank again. You can also tear items from newspapers which represent wrongdoing in their communities. These can be stuck to the cross as an act of prayer to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

In The Dark

'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

'To cry out to the God of life in the midst of darkness, to hold on to joy while walking in a valley of tears, to keep speaking of peace when sounds of war fill the air - that is what prayer is about. It is indeed clinging to the Lord when all is being torn apart by greed, hatred, violence and war.' (Henri Nouwen)

Jesus never promised an absence of trials, but he did recommend praying for God's strength and protection in the midst of them. Creative prayer spaces are particularly significant for those who are going through difficult or dry seasons in their lives. When God seems far away, and your prayers seem to be bouncing off the ceiling, it can be comforting and reassuring to be in a place with the physical evidence of prayer.

Safe Places

If you are creating a prayer room, try to include a space in the room which is enclosed and comfortable. Room dividers or hanging sheets of fabric can separate an area and cushions offer a place to relax. In this area, place small cards printed with Bible verses about God's love and protection. Encourage participants to use this place to rest in God and draw strength from him.

Facing the Furnace

Hang a large net so it creates a screen. Give everyone a flame-shaped piece of red, orange or yellow tinted translucent paper or film. Ask

them to think of a personal trial or challenge in their life.

When faced with the fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego reaffirmed their commitment to God in every circumstance of life (see Daniel 3). Participants can stick their flame to the net as a sign of their commitment to God in the midst of the dark times. The net will eventually begin to look like a fire.

Assurance

'For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.'

The final phrase of the Lord's Prayer resonates with deep trust and confidence in God's greatness. Having worshipped, dreamed, presented personal needs and invited God into our dark places, we prepare to go out into the world with acceptance of personal frailty and convinced of God's amazing mercy. In every circumstance, we know that ultimate power, glory, authority and dominion belong to God.

Leaving the prayer room, physically or metaphorically, can symbolise two actions. First, we place our trust in God., reaffirming our belief that he will hold and sustain us. Second, we commit to act. We prepare to be the answer to our own prayers.

Take-away Prayer

It can be effective to have people take something with them following prayer. This can be something which reminds them of decisions made or situations they have committed to prayer. For example, give everyone a small piece of string and ask them to get into pairs. As they pray for one another, each person ties a knot in the other person's string and gives it



back to them. The string serves as a reminder to pray for the other person.

Ready for Action

Fill a box or basket with coloured cards, each containing a promise from Scripture. Give everyone a blank white card. They write on their card one thing they promise to do in the next few days. This might be to speak to a friend about Jesus or encourage a lonely neighbour. Make a promise exchange. As they place their card in the basket, they exchange it for one of the coloured cards. This card is a reminder of God's promise to them and a reminder to fulfill their promise to him.

'Prayer does not demand that we interrupt our work, but that we continue working as if it were a prayer. It is not necessary to always be meditating, nor to consciously experience the sensation that we are talking to God, no matter how nice this would be. What matters is being with him, living in him, in his will. To love with a pure heart, to love everybody, especially to love the poor, is a twenty-four-hour prayer.' (Mother Teresa).

By Lyndall Bywater 24-7/SA Prayer Network Coordinator The Salvation Army Evangelism Department United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland. www.24-7sa.org.uk



Easter ... New Beginning? With an Even Better End

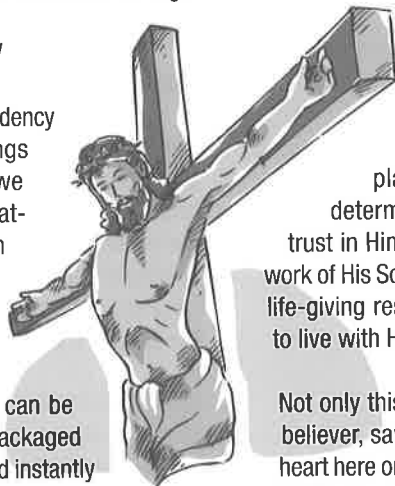
Isobel Robinson, Singapore, Malaysia & Myanmar Territory
Adapted for Cedar Springs by June Newbury

*Up from the grave He arose
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes
He arose a victor from the dark domain
And He lives forever with His saints to reign
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

Today, we have a tendency to dispose of things quite easily. In fact, we who have lived in the latter part of the twentieth and now the twenty first century could easily be dubbed a "Disposable Society".

Almost everything that can be made is built quickly, packaged neatly, sold cheaply, used instantly and disposed of just as readily without giving it a second thought.

This philosophy is permeating many cultures around the world. People have come to place less value on the craftsmanship of an item, tending often to settle for the stylish cheaper brand. They know that the fashion will change quickly and, in order to "keep up with the Jones's" they will need to be ready to replace their recently purchased item for the latest "new, improved version."



God, on the other hand, is not like that. He says, that people are so valuable that He doesn't want them to "perish" which means to be rendered useless (John 3:16). However, since man (mankind) is destined for destruction because of his innately sinful nature, God put in place a reclamation plan. He determined that whoever put their trust in Him, by believing in the atoning work of His Son's death and His subsequent life-giving resurrection, would be allowed to live with Him eternally.

Not only this, God promised to give each believer, saved by grace, a new spiritual heart here on earth (Ezekiel 36:26). He also promised a new body to live in Heaven; a resurrected body that could live forever, just like Christ. Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die" (John 11: 25).

Finally, everyone makes a "new beginning" when they ask Christ to forgive them of their sins and to come and



reside in them. The good news is that they receive an even "better end" because of Jesus' resurrection since it is through this divine act, they are promised the real victory, over their last and greatest enemy; death (Hebrews 2:14, 15).

Although your item may not last forever, it probably still has a lot of life left in it yet — and someone else could be very glad to have it!

Miracle Stepping Stones

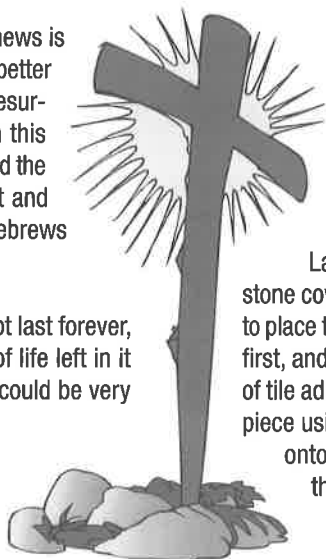
Items needed:

- Stepping-stones
- Broken tiles (many tile centres will donate them if you ask)
- Broken dishes
- Mosaic items
- Shells
- Marbles
- Small stones

No piece should be larger than 4 centimeters in diameter. Use what you have on hand. The idea is to turn broken cast-off items into treasures.



- Popsicle sticks or tongue depressors (one for each woman)
- Tile adhesive (ask at a tiling shop)
- Grey grout (ask at a tiling shop)



Instructions:

The tile and mosaic pieces are to be used to make the Miracle Stepping-stones. Encourage every woman to take part in the process.

Lay out the mosaic pieces on the stone covering the entire surface. It is best to place the pieces around the outside edge first, and then fill in. Apply a good amount of tile adhesive to the back of each mosaic piece using the Popsicle stick and press it onto the top of the stone. Work until the entire top is covered.

Allow the adhesive to dry thoroughly for at least 24 hours, then grout the areas of the stone not covered by the mosaic pieces.

Apply the grout into the spaces between tiles and use an old sponge to wipe off the excess grout. Rinse the sponge often.



With a soft circular sweeping motion, remove all the grout from the top of mosaic pieces. A gray or darker grout will highlight the colors of the stepping-stones.

Apply grout to the sides of the stone as well to seal the cement.

The completed Miracle Stepping-stones could be placed in an area of the church where they will be used as practical stepping-stones. Let them visually tell the story of transforming brokenness into a thing of beauty and wholeness a remembrance of the new life that is ours in Christ.

A Mother's Table

Adapted from Resource Material, UK Territory

When I was eight years old, I remember stuffing my pockets with snatches of nature on my way home from school one afternoon. Mum watched me lay out my loot carefully on the kitchen table before she examined the bits of pink blossoms and fragile leaves. Her hand passed over the tiny white pebbles and squashed red geraniums, choosing a tattered grey feather, which I'd almost left in the street as broken and useless. I remember how she ran her fingers up the small spiny thing and turned it towards the kitchen window.

I watched as soft hues of sunshine lit the feather, changing it from dirty drab to bright silvery-blue. It shimmered in the light. Mum twirled it between her fingers and spoke to me of how God can shine his beauty into the tattered places of our lives. That night at the dinner table, the whole family admired my pocket treasures, which Mum had cleverly turned into a centrepiece. She'd scattered the tiny pebbles and blossoms in a circle around a glass bud vase that held the squashed geraniums. And there, proud as could be, standing tall and straight in the centre of the geraniums, was the wonderful feather.

'Pretty feather,' Dad commented.

'It wasn't when I found it,' I said.

'What changed it?' he asked.

I thought a minute, then I answered, 'Mum touched it.'

Years later, the wind invited my children and me to join in a carefree dance. Out we scurried with jackets and bags. Later we carried home our treasures.

Rosy-cheeked and breathless, my son dumped



his goodies on the kitchen table. Along with several twigs and many rocks, he had bagged a snail's shell. Lost in wonder he examined it. His sister meanwhile tugged her collection of big, crunched-up, amber-coloured leaves from her bag.

I put a thick marigold-coloured candle in the centre of the table, and my daughter arranged each acorn, rock, leaf and twig around it. My son found a place of honour at the candle's base for the snail's shell. On a small card I printed, 'Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good' and placed it amongst the treasures.

Then we chose the best leaves, ironed them between two pieces of waxed paper, and hung them in the kitchen window, where the sun illuminated them like a celestial x-ray. With great delight the children discovered that you could look right through a leaf and see its 'skeleton'.

I told them how God can see right through us, and knows what's in our hearts and minds.

Afterwards I realised the awesome privilege I had of touching my children's hearts, and opening their eyes to the eternal, and the sheer wonder of being a Mum!

It is a place of **B**uilding happy memories and stability in all areas of life. It can provide a great sense of security for a child.

The Kitchen or Dining Room Table:

This piece of furniture has always been a very important part of family life. Don't let it fade out of use. Some 'old' habits are worth preserving.



It is a place of **L**ove and **L**aughter where the family enjoy each other's company. It is also the place of celebration for special events such as birthdays.

It is a place of **T**eaching. It can be used to feed the family spiritually, mentally and physically.

It should be an **E**xtended table, where other people, not of the immediate family, can join in.

It is a place of **A**sking and **A**nswering questions. The affairs of the day can be shared, the good and the bad.

Those whose families have grown and flown should not forget the grace of hospitality around the extended **T**ABLE.

Two Very Different Poems:

Just As His Mother Used To ...

He criticized her puddings and he didn't like her cake.

He wished she'd make the biscuits that his mother used to bake.

*She didn't wash the dishes and she didn't make the stew,
She didn't mend his socks as his mother used to do.*

*Oh well, she was not perfect, though she tried to do her best,
Until at last she thought that it was time she had a rest.*

*So one day when he said the same old rigmarole all through,
She turned and boxed his ears - just as his mother used to do!*

(Anonymous)



A Mother's Prayer

*So much to do! Feet ever on the run,
Hands never still; so many tasks to share;
Thoughts that seek always others' woes to bear*

*From morning's early light till setting sun.
But when the longest hours are past and done,
When baby lips have lisped their evening prayer
In thanks to God for all his loving care
Of them, and for their health, and friends, and fun;*

*And when their heads upon the pillow press
In sleepy comfort, and the room above is still, then I review the busy day,
And bless the altar of my weariness
On which I make my sacrifice of love.
'For their dear sakes, Lord, make me good,' I pray. (Mona Westergaard)*



Embroidered Easter Card

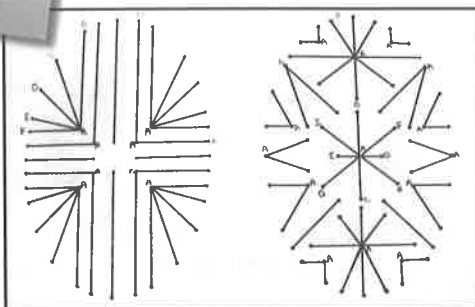
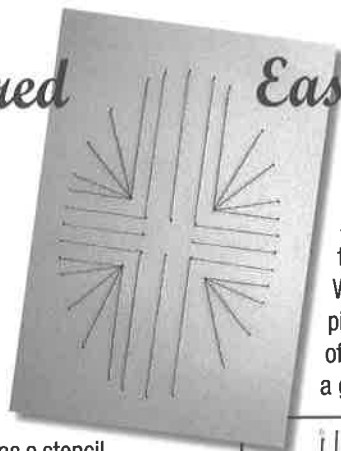
Materials

- Card Stock, Tape
- Embroidery Floss, Sewing Needles (assorted sizes)
- Glue Stick, Tea Towel

Directions

Trace or photocopy the design so it can be used as a stencil. Cut the card stock in half, and then fold in half. Place the card open on a folded tea towel. Centre the design on the front right hand side of the card, and tape in place if desired. Take a large tapestry needle and pierce through the stencil and the card stock. Pierce all the dots/ holes at once then remove the stencil. Using a smaller sewing needle, thread with embroidery floss. Bring the needle and thread up through the back of the card, starting with

hole. Secure the end of the floss with a piece of tape. Continue to sew the card following the pattern, taping the ends down as you go. When the sewing is complete cut a piece of card stock to fit the backside of the front half to cover the tape. Use a glue stick to secure.



Full instructions can be obtained through Women's Ministries, THQ Canada and Bermuda.



Outdoor Candles

Materials

- Mason jar
- Sand
- Tea Light
- Wood Embellishment (or decoration of choice)
- Craft Paint
- Paint Brushes
- Ribbon or Raffia
- Sand
- Hot Glue Gun and Glue

Directions

Paint the wood embellishment to your liking. Secure to the side of the Mason jar with hot glue. Tie the ribbon or raffia in a bow under the lip of the jar. Pour approximately three inches of sand into the Mason jar. Place the tea light on top of the sand. These candle holders look especially nice in a grouping on outside patio furniture, or lined along a garden pathway.

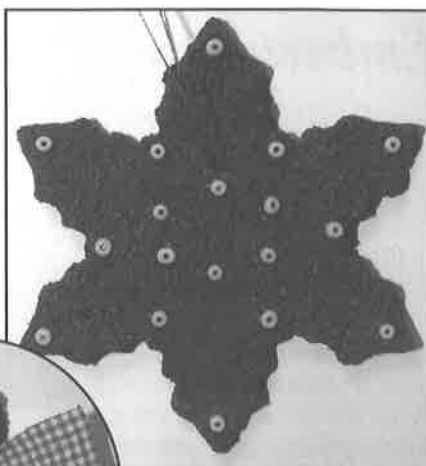
Spicy Ornaments

Materials

- 6 Tbsp. Applesauce
- 9 Tbsp. Ground Cinnamon (plus extra for rolling dough)
- 1 tsp. Ground Cloves
- Rolling Pin
- Wax Paper (to roll dough out on)
- Small Cookie Cutters
- Skewer
- Cookie Sheet
- Decorations (optional)
 - Glue, Raffia, Ribbon, Seed Beads, Dried Flowers etc.

Directions

Combine applesauce, cinnamon and cloves. Mix with your hands until the mixture has a claylike consistency. Sprinkle cinnamon onto wax paper and rolling pin. Roll dough out to about 1/8 inches thick.



Cut various shapes out with the cookie cutters.

With a skewer draw any details and make a hole to thread a ribbon or string through. Place shapes on a cookie sheet.

Preheat oven to 120F and place cut-outs in the oven for 1 1/2 hours. Decorate with beads or as desired. String ribbon through to hang.



Mosaic Sun Catcher

Materials

- Wooden Frame
- Coloured Stones or Beads (transparent if possible)
- Screw Eyes
- String or Wire
- Hot Glue Sticks and Glue Gun
- Paint (optional)

Directions

Dismantle frame. Clean glass. Decorate frame if desired. Hot glue gun stones to the glass in a pattern. Put the glass back in the frame, leave the backing off. Screw the screw eyes into the top of the frame. Use the string or wire to hang the sun catcher.

Tea Biscuits

Recipe from Joan Stratton submitted by Margaret Hiscock



Ingredients:

- 2 cups flour
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 4 tsp. baking powder
- 1 beaten egg
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1/2 cup shortening

Directions:

Sift dry ingredients together and cut in shortening until it resembles coarse meal. Beat egg and combine with milk, continue beating until foamy. Add to flour mixture. Stir until dough follows fork. Turn onto lightly floured surface or wax paper. Knead gently with the heel of the hand for 20 strokes. Roll out 3/4 inch thick and cut in small rounds with floured cutter. Place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 450 degrees for 10-14 minutes. Should make 16-24 biscuits. Add 1/2 to 3/4 cup of raisins, if desired.

Newbury's Antipasta

Submitted by June Newbury (Excellent Fundraiser)

Ingredients:

- 2 cans finely chopped green beans
- 2 cans finely chopped yellow beans
- 2 cans finely chopped black olives
- 2 cans finely chopped mushrooms
- 1 quart finely chopped dill pickle
- 2 large finely chopped onions
- 1 large finely chopped red pepper
- 1 large finely chopped green pepper
- 2 finely chopped medium sized cauliflower

- 4 cans flaked tuna, drained
- 7 cups ketchup
- 2 cups vinegar

Directions:

Place all ingredients in large pot and mix well. Heat just to a boiling over medium heat. Seal in hot sterilized jars. Makes about 24-26 small jars. Serve chilled with crackers.



Bran Muffins

From Jean Williams' kitchen. (Taken from Kelloggs all bran box ... years ago!)

Ingredients:

- 1 cup bran buds
- 1 cup boiling water
- 2 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- 2 1/2 tps baking soda
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 1/2 cups buttermilk
- 2 cups Kelloggs all bran
- 1 cup raisins



together flour, soda, salt, set aside. In large bowl cream together shortening and sugar, add eggs one at a time, beating well between each addition. Add dry ingredients alternately with buttermilk, stirring only until combined. Stir in 2 cups of all bran — add cooled bran mixture — then raisins.

Cover tightly and let stand at least overnight in refrigerator before baking. Mixture will keep in refrigerator up to 3 weeks. Do not stir. When required, bake at 400 degrees about 30 minutes or until done. Yields 2 dozen muffins depending on the amount that is used in muffin tin.

Directions:

In a small bowl combine 1 cup of bran buds and boiling water. Set aside to cool. Mix

Benefits of Team Leadership

Discipleship Journal 1994

It would be much easier to recruit new leaders for small group meetings if they knew they would have a team to assist them. A group of three, consisting of a leader, an assistant and a shepherd has proved to

ments. The leader could study the group to select a person to approach about sharing future leadership.

What are the benefits of this type of leadership team?

A team is more effective in keeping the group focused on its purpose.

Why is focus so important? The purpose of a Bible study is to learn together from God's Word and how it applies in everyday life, so keeping the discussion directed towards this end should always be the emphasis. The fellowship with fellow believers is important, but it is the Bible study that will bring about inside-transformation and is the more important outcome.

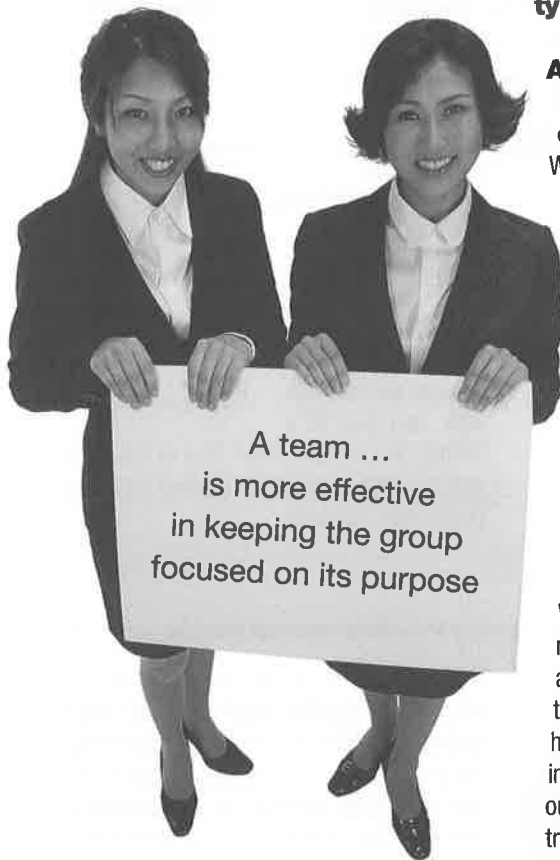
A leadership team creates a larger base for future leaders.

When team roles are clearly defined, group members might wish to identify with them and become involved. Some might not feel they could lead the Bible study but would happily lead the prayer time. Those interested in eventually leading a Bible study could start out as assistants, with the team giving them training and support.

A leadership team fosters accountability.

Quality training, occasional coaching, and the combined common sense and wisdom of the leadership team mean that problems are handled by the groups themselves to mutual satisfaction and benefit.

Adapted for Cedar Springs by Cath Ward, Toronto, ON



work well. The leader would be responsible for conducting the Bible study and selecting and training the assistant who would handle the group business, open the meetings and occasionally lead the study. The shepherd would lead the prayer time, oversee and organize any projects in which the group becomes engaged, and arrange the refresh-



Leading a Meeting - Before, During & After

Adapted for Cedar Springs by Linda Bradbury

Guidelines to help to lead women's ministry meetings more effectively and efficiently.

Schedule the Meeting

When you schedule a committee meeting, consider the topics that must be covered, and allocate the appropriate amount of time. Try to stay closely to the business on hand and allotted time frame.

Distribute Meeting Agenda

Circulate the agenda in advance, to give members sufficient time to prepare for any discussions or decisions that will occur. If members come prepared, less time will be spent answering background information questions and make more time available for discussing the important issues.

Lead the Meeting

Start your meeting on time! Begin at the scheduled time even if some members are not present.

First provide an overview of agenda items and introduce the overall objective of the meeting.

This provides direction for the meeting and reinforces what needs to be accomplished.

The Leader should steer the discussion in a way that focuses on the meeting objectives.

Items discussed that need to be addressed further should be assigned at the meeting to a particular individual or group for follow-up action. Also set a deadline and priority level for the action items.

Wrap-up

At the end of the meeting, the leader should review the action items, who is responsible, and by when.

Once the objective has been accomplished, adjourn the meeting. Even if it is thirty minutes earlier than expected!

Provide the Meeting Information

After the meeting, send minutes to all members by e-mail, photocopy or handouts. It is important to record the discussions to keep track of follow up action for all the items assigned during the meeting.

Leading –In the Beginning

When people first attend a small group Bible Study meeting it may be with a certain amount of trepidation and uncertainty as to what they might expect. It is essential that from the beginning the leader puts their minds at ease and assures them that their wishes and confidence will be respected in every way.



Be honest: There must be complete trust between leader and all those attending. The leader might begin by telling some of her own background and revealing that she also sometimes has doubts and failings. Icebreaking activities can help, but avoid requiring too much personal disclosure too soon. Humour can provide a helpful means of relating to one another, share some funny memories.

Communicate clearly: For the first few meetings, review logistics carefully (i.e. timing, format). Also confirm any ground rules or guidelines that are pertinent to the group. Reiterate before each prayer time the need for confidentiality concerning shared prayer requests.

Show acceptance: Group members may come from diverse church backgrounds and lifestyles. Some may be long-time Christians, some may be spiritual infants. Help group members focus on what they share in common, rather than the differences, — a love for Jesus and a desire to know Him more intimately. This, too, is important to verbalize often in the early weeks of the group life.

Set the pace: Within the first few weeks, the leader should try to get together with each person outside the usual meeting time. Meet for coffee, take a walk together, etc. Ask what they would like to see happen and what they are expecting from the group. Ask them what their dreams are for their lives. Share some of your hopes and goals. Ask how you can pray for them. Give them an idea of the type of friendship they can expect as the group continues to meet.

Recruit prayers: Don't forget to pay some attention to yourself as well! Ask a few faithful, praying friends to intercede for you and your group for at least the first three or four weeks. You will need extra energy, your group will need extra encouraging, and you will all need extra prayer! It will be well worth the effort when you see your tentative, timid new group become a well-bonded, Christ-loving community.

Adapted for Cedar Springs by Cath Ward, Toronto, ON



Types of Mentors

ing or ministry. Focuses on teaching how to do something. Particularly needed by people stepping into a new responsibility or struggling with a current one.

Most of us look for an “ideal mentor” who can do the whole range of mentoring functions. We will rarely find one there just aren’t enough mentors who can do it all. But if we narrow our mentoring needs to specific areas, we will usually be able to find someone who can mentor in a particular area. Below are eight kinds of mentors who can meet specific needs in different times of life.

Intensive

Discipler: Provides guidance in the basics of following Christ, usually by helping a young Christian develop spiritual disciplines or habits. The relationship continues in this form until the believer shifts from external motivation by the discipler to internal motivation to grow and follow Christ.

Spiritual Guide: Helps a mentoree at any stage of the Christian life assess his or her own development and take initiative for change and growth. Points out strengths and weaknesses in spirituality. Provides accountability and perspective on what it means to become Christ like in all areas of life. The relationship is need-centered, and may last from a few months to several years.

Coach: Motivates and imparts skills needed to meet a task or challenge, such as parent-

Occasional

Counselor: Acts as a sounding board, offering advice regarding specific situations. Helps others see events and decisions in light of “the big picture.”

Teacher: Helps the mentoree learn about and understand a particular subject and motivates him or her to use this knowledge. Links mentoree to other resources. May be a formal or informal relationship.

Sponsor: Selects potential leaders within his or her organization and provides the encouragement, leadership skills, and resources to succeed there.

Passive

Contemporary Model: Indirectly motivates and imparts values by serving as a model for life, ministry, or profession. Demonstrates the possibility and reality of these values in a life. May not be aware of his or her role; does not necessarily have to know the mentoree personally.

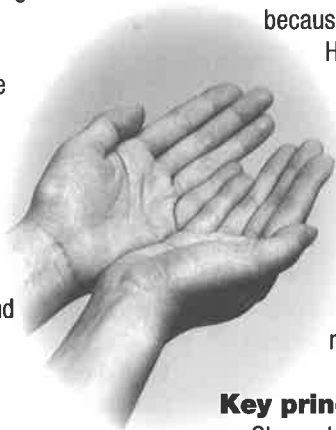
Historical Model: Someone from the past who teaches dynamic principles and values for life, ministry, and/or profession. Usually “mentors” through his or her biography or autobiography.

Prayer: The Foundation for Effective Women's Ministries

Most leaders dream of continuous growth and a powerful impact upon the lives of all involved. Unfortunately, not every ministry succeeds. Sometimes those that do succeed outwardly, fail to produce life changes inwardly in the participants.

If you are beginning a new women's ministry, building on an existing ministry, or initiating a new aspect of your ministry, there are questions that should be considered: What is to be the key objective? What is it that unlocks the door to God's power? On the response to this question will depend the degree of success of your ministry.

There is a growing sense that God is calling His people to pray and there appears to be a growing interest in prayer. While this is a vital need for every Christian's daily life, it must come from a deep and growing love for God.



Five Subtle Misconceptions

- Prayer alone insures successful ministries.
- The more I pray, the more God answers; or the more prayer, the more God will see it my way.
- God always answers prayer in the way I think best.
- Prayer changes things to my way of thinking.
- There is power in prayer to remove all my problems.

The Key to Success in Ministry

The foundation of success in ministry, is a deepening love relationship with God. A successful ministry is a by-product of intimacy with God. The more you talk with God, study His Word, nurture a love relationship with Him, and are obedient to Him, the more God leads you.

To begin and develop women's ministries, God needs leaders who will love Him totally, because this love relationship pleases Him. He invites women to be where He is, and honors the love relationship by accomplishing His work through them.

In an activity-oriented situation, ensure that the love relationship has pre-eminence and use prayer as a confirming means to success.

Key principles to practice:

- Step out in faith
- Put God first
- Seek His interests
- Love Holy Living
- Be willing to change for Him
- Focus on serving others first
- Practice these principles and pursue Him with passion and intensity.

When a life is characterized by love for Him and demonstrated by these qualities, prayer will add richness and depth to the ministry.





Different Women ... Different Needs

Ideas and samples for Women's Ministry Surveys

There are many different ways to determine the needs of the women in your church. One of the best ways is to create a survey.

One of the focuses of this should be to establish a way in which to contact the women in your church and find out general information about their lifestyle and at what stage of life they are.

It is also useful to ask questions as to the direction of the specific ministries that the leaders are considering.

You will want to know what the needs of your women are, both personally and in ministry.

To ensure that the surveys are completed and returned, they could be filled out at an arranged activity or to offer a door prize on receipt.

A survey is an effective tool for finding women to serve in various areas of ministry and gathering general information about the age, marital status, and availability of the

women. This would be a helpful guide but it will not always pinpoint just one specific area of ministry.

The only sure way to identify the needs of the women in your church group is to get to know them. One on one conversation is the first place to begin.

Your ministry leaders can also facilitate discussion groups on focus areas. This will identify the need for different women groups in your church. Mothers of small children, single moms, single working women, working moms, empty nesters, etc ... Consider meeting with women from each of these groups to talk with them about their needs and what ministries, not necessarily programs, will meet their needs. Find out who they are, what motivates them, where they are struggling, where they have strength, how they define church, womanhood and ministry. It is advisable to limit your concentration to 5-6 from each of these groups and meet with them separately.

Prayerfully consider who to ask and trust the Lord to bring names to your mind. Let them know the purpose of the discussion and ask them well in advance of the meeting to give them time to think about what they would like to share. This is a process that will take time.

Spread it out over several months and pray for your group.



Keep notes of everything that was discussed, you will need to remember the all details. It will probably be necessary to do these

focus groups again in the future for re-evaluation and it will be helpful to be able to refer back to this information.

Suggested Women's Ministry Survey

The Women's Ministry wants to ascertain the needs of all women in the church in order to meet those needs. Please take a moment to complete this survey by marking your choice and including your name and address

What do you see as your greatest need(s)?

- Spiritual
- Physical
- Emotional
- Social
- Financial
- Other



Enrichment Programs:

- Home Management
- Budgeting/Organizing
- Parenting Skills

Personal Growth:

- Self esteem
- Personal appearance
- Exercise/diet

Social Programs:

- Women's Night Out
- Special Events
- Crafts



Do you need childcare provided at Women's Ministry Events?

- Daytime events
- Evening events

Do you need transportation to attend Women's Ministry Events?

- Yes
- No

Where are you in your spiritual journey?

Do you feel far away from God?

- Would like to get to know and experience a personal relationship with God?
- My walk with God is close and personal
- I would like to help others in their walk with God

Do you feel our Women's Ministry programs and activities help women get to know each other and become connected?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Further comments

Have you been previously involved in a Women's Ministry program?

- Yes
- No

Considering all your involvements, in what area of Women's Ministries would you be most interested?

- Attending a special event once in a while
- Weekly participation
- Helping out periodically
- Providing my expertise in an area
- Helping at a leadership level
- Assisting a team
- Teaching a Bible Study
- Heading up a specific Ministry Area

A Journey of Strength

Seven days of Scripture, Reflection and Prayer will help in finding courage, strength and hope as we seek to live strong.

*Weekly meditations by Donna Simms
Gander, Newfoundland*



Counting on God's rule to prevail, I take heart and gain strength. Habakkuk 3:19, *The Message*

A Journey to Find Strength

God said this once and for all; how many times have I heard it repeated? "Strength comes straight from God." Psalm 62:11, *The Message*

I have struggled with my weight for years and I know many of you can relate to my woes. It has been a constant factor in my life. For many years I watched as my weight consistently went up, not taking any ownership for my obesity. I blamed it rather on my metabolism, which obviously was slower than everyone else's. Or my pregnancies, the last one being 15 years ago! Finally I decided to really look at my life and make some changes. What I discovered is that I am a stress eater. As a child of sexual abuse I had turned to food for comfort and protection. Not only was food my comfort and protection, it was also my reward. Every accomplishment was celebrated with a dessert.

Things had to change, but how does one change a lifetime of bad habits and deep-

rooted thought processes? I knew I couldn't do it on my own, Psalm 62:11 reminded me how, strength comes straight from God.

I could no longer kid myself and take the easy road of avoidance, it was time to re-evaluate my life and lean on God for help. The joy of this journey has not only been the weight lost, but the mantle of being the poor victim has been lifted and a survivor has emerged.

Today I still find myself slipping too easily into old eating patterns when stressful times come, but now I have a higher standard for myself and the temple that God has created. I haven't reached my weight goal yet, but a number is no longer a consuming factor. What has been comforting and uplifting is that on my knees I have found courage, strength, wisdom and a fellowship with my Creator that has transformed my thinking and thus, my life.

God said this once and for all; how many times have I heard it repeated? "Strength comes straight from God."

I did not have the strength to take this journey, but thank God He did!

A Journey of *Strength*



Are You Able?

Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status.

Romans 15:1, *The Message*

Friends have always been such a blessing for me. There are times when I smile at the unlikely links that God makes. A few years ago I found myself on a small reserve in Northern Manitoba doing a women's ministry weekend with another missionary. Suddenly I began to laugh at the unlikely pair we made. My colleague and friend, was born in Germany and her parents moved to British Columbia when she was young. I was born in a small town in the most easterly province of Canada in Newfoundland and here we stood together ministering to an aboriginal audience. In that moment I realized that if either of us had not followed God's plan for our lives we never would have met and what a blessing I would have missed.

My friend Brigitte's faithfulness to serve God through her own personal grief has inspired my life. After losing both children in tragic accidents, I have seen her use the experience of her pain to "lend a hand" to others,

even when her own hands were weak. I have witnessed her give of herself at times when it was not convenient, but necessary. The humility in which she gives has been both inspiring and motivating. It has encouraged me to look past my own hurts and see how I can help someone who has not found God's peace. This is not always 'convenient', but always rewarding.

What is convenient for you? Romans 15:1, certainly reminds us that *strength is for service*, not convenience. Is there someone you can reach out to help today? Not because you will be seen doing so, but because you want to give to another the strength God has so freely given you. Today holds the opportunity for you to be a blessing...Will you?

A Journey of Strength

Don't Be Afraid to Be You

Recently I heard about a woman who went to the doctor. She said, "Doctor, I woke up this morning feeling awful and when I looked in the mirror my eyes were puffy and had dark circles. My skin was a chalky white and my cheeks were sunken. Even my hair is dry and frizzy. Doctor, please tell me what's wrong with me!" The doctor looking at the lady replied, "Well I can tell you one thing, there's nothing wrong with your sight."

How have you been seeing yourself lately? Do you find yourself sitting in fear when God wants you to stand in His strength? Are you hiding the gifts that God has given you?

If God is our stronghold, we should be using our gifts and talents not only to change our lives, but the lives of those around us. We have to stop looking at what we can't do and identify what we can do! For example, as a child I didn't know my mother had the gift of hospitality, but what I did know was that she could go to the grocery store and bring home strangers who were traveling. She'd give them a home cooked meal, offer our bathroom for a shower and send them off with a smile and a loaf of homemade bread.

How did that translate into her church? She offered her gift of hospitality as a service by helping to cater and host the corps dinners.



The LORD is
my light and
my salvation,
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the
stronghold of my
life, of whom shall
I be afraid?

Psalm 27:1



She worked within her giftedness. As her daughter, I saw Jesus in her compassion and kindness.

Remember, God created you for a purpose, He didn't make a mistake, so don't be afraid to be you. With God as your stronghold you have nothing to fear.

A Journey of *Strength*

Do You Have A Plan?

When I think back over my life and all the plans I've made, I smile. Some in my youth were made from an idealistic standard that could never be reached. Like the plan to conquer the world, or at least my home town, make millions of dollars and solve the problem of world poverty.

This "foolish" plan of God is far wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is far stronger than the greatest of human strength.

1 Corinthians 1:25, *New Living Translation*

In the opposite contingent, some plans were made with an unrealistically lower standard which reflected the frustrations I was experiencing at that time. It was during those

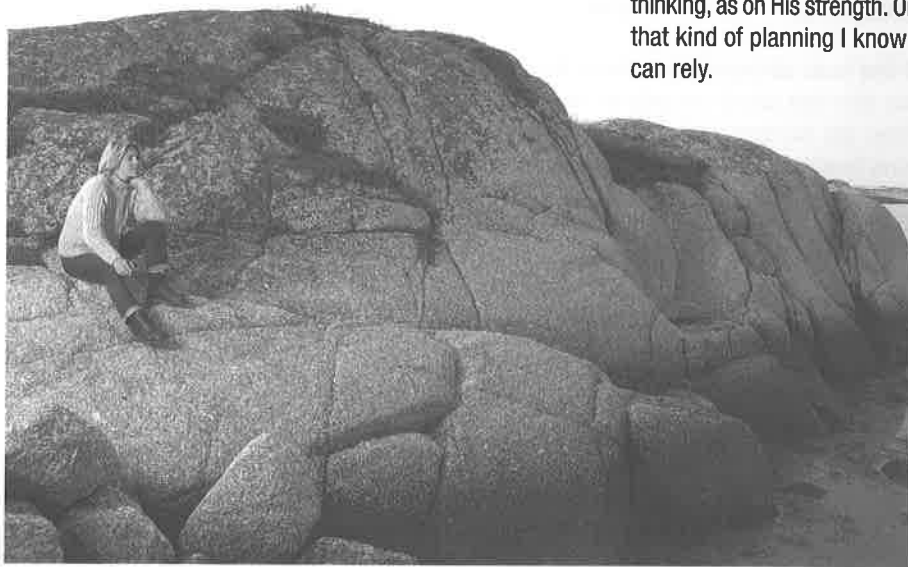
times that I was content to not work to my full potential.

When I read 1 Corinthians 1:25, I am reminded how strong God really is. What I see as forward thinking and innovative, is nothing compared to His wisdom and knowledge. It also is a reminder to me that when I'm making all these wonderful plans, I need to spend time with the one whose plans are far wiser than I can ever dream.

It is when I lean on my own strength and not on God's that I find myself making safe plans, not God reliant ones.

I once read a quote that said, Try something for God today so big, that unless he intervenes, it's sure to fail.

The truth is that if I lean on God and trust in His strength, then the plans we design together will not depend so much on my limited thinking, as on His strength. On that kind of planning I know I can rely.



A Journey of *Strength*

God's Wardrobe

Good news ladies, God does care about our wardrobe! The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith and the all important helmet of salvation, with the sword of the spirit can all be found.

A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil.

Ephesians 6:10-11, New Living Translation

If we really believed this, many of us would be running out to pick up these items, if we could find them at our local mall. No amount of time or energy would be too much to have these essentials. However, it is not to our local mall that we need to run, but rather to God's Word. There we can find these important items that are not visibly worn, but spiritually worn.

Last week I bought a sweater and as much as I love that sweater, it will eventually become worn out or out of style. The "Armour of God" however, will never lose its importance or power. Instead of digressing away from God's wardrobe and expanding our physical one, we need to study each piece and put on this spiritual armour, in order to be strong.

Aren't you glad that this scripture verse doesn't read, Be strong with YOUR mighty power.

God promises to provide the power if we put on the armour. Is it too much to ask that we do our part? He has provided the wardrobe, we just need to make the effort to put it on. If you are thinking you wish He had a cashmere

sweater for you to wear, believe me, when you're out there fighting for your eternal life, you'll be glad you have God's armour and especially thankful for His power.

Maybe we can substitute one of those many shopping trips for an hour studying God's wardrobe for us. Cashmere might feel soft to the skin, but I'll take the breastplate of righteousness over cashmere any day!



He'll Keep Me Strong

He will keep you strong right up to the end,
and he will keep you free from all blame on the
great day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

1 Corinthians 1:8, New Living Translation



*M*y children are the joy of my heart and this year our oldest son set off for college. The separation has been difficult for me. Yet I am well aware that it is time to let go and allow him to follow his own dreams for the future. It would be foolish for me to lock him in his room and keep him home because it eases my heartache. Therefore, I've released him to follow the passion that God has placed in his heart.

Time and time again I am reminded that God said, "He would keep me strong" He never ever said, He'd keep me from...

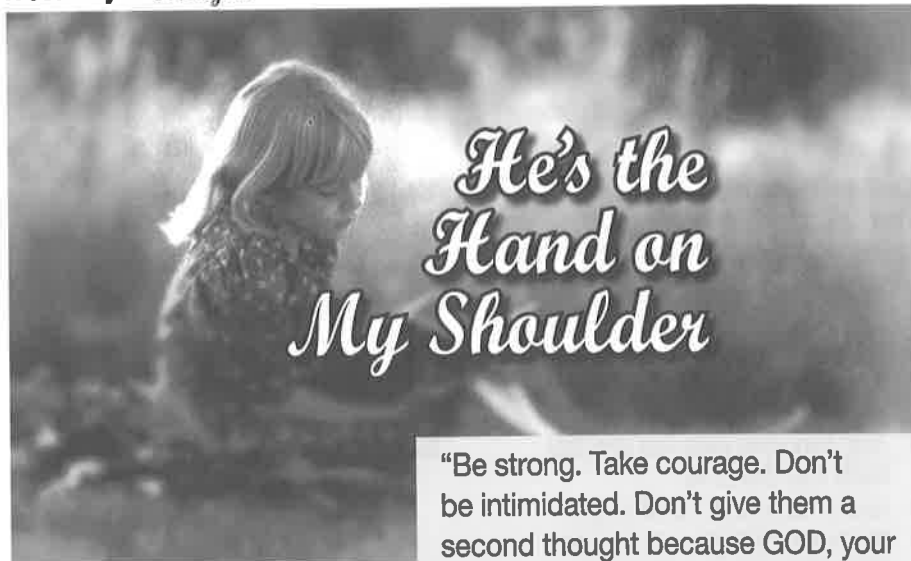
I think that's where so many stumble. We want seclusion and segregation from pain. There are even incidents when well meaning Christians even suggest that if we had enough faith, we wouldn't experience the temptations or the trials of life.

That always brings me back to the garden of Gethsemane. In the dark hours of that night Jesus wanted out. He didn't want the pain that the cross would bring, yet he prayed, "...your (God's) will be done" (Matt.26:42) and God's will included a painful path to great victory.

The 'feel good' Christianity that people seek, leaves so many with feelings of frustration and bitter disappointment. Yet God never said he'd keep us from hurt and pain "...right up to the end..." He did however promise "...to keep us strong."

What are we being kept strong for? Strong for that great day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. When our hearts are focused on the day to day annoyances, we sometimes forget that the path we've chosen leads to great victory.

My son will find his own heartache and disappointments along the way. My prayer is that we have taught him that his relationship with God will keep him strong until that great day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns.



He's the Hand on My Shoulder

"Be strong. Take courage. Don't be intimidated. Don't give them a second thought because GOD, your God, is striding ahead of you. He's right there with you. He won't let you down; He won't leave you."

Deuteronomy 31:6, *The Message*

As a young girl I often appeared to be strong, outgoing and unafraid. I took on the lead role in plays, was the master of ceremonies at school concerts, laughed at my own mishaps and did well academically. On the outside things appeared to be in control. However, behind closed doors my life was different. I kept a secret. Between the ages of 9 and 12 years old I was being sexually abused. The facade of strength was just that. My public image and my private thoughts were opposing forces, until one day the truth of Deuteronomy 31:6, became not just a verse of scripture, but my reality.

It was a day I will never forget, though to many it was an ordinary day. I had carefully maneuvered my way from my upstairs bedroom to the back door of my home. The weight of last night's encounter still too obvious on my face to handle a one on one with my mother. I slipped into the back garden, found a spot and nestled deep into the long grass. There I poured out my angry rants to this unseen God, who I felt didn't care about me. As the words

cascaded from my lips, I sensed a hand on my shoulder. Looking up I thought that I had been found. To my surprise no one was there. I assumed that I was losing my 12 year old mind and continued in a softer tone to cry out accusations to a God who didn't care. It was then I felt the hand again. This time however, I didn't look up. A charge went from my shoulder through my body and a voice pierced my thoughts and said, Stand up!

Initially I thought I was going crazy and then I heard it again. So clearly God said, It is time to face your goliath. You stand up and I will go with you.

To make a long story short, that day the giant was defeated and the truth, "He's right there with you. He won't let you down; He won't leave you," became my strength and my foundation.

He is the Strength of my Song

Suggested items for Sunday Worship Service

Call to Worship

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. Psalm 104:33

Songs

- *A mighty fortress is our God*
SASB 1/Tune 640
- *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God almighty*
SASB 220 /Tune 748
- *How Great thou Art* SASB 993
- *Be strong in the grace of the Lord*
SASB 679/ 481
- *He Giveth More Grace* SASB 579 /Tune 592

Choruses:

- *My Life is in You, Lord*
- *Blessed be the Lord God Almighty*
- *Be Bold, be strong*
- *Lean on his arm, trusting in his love*
(SASB chorus 138)

Prayers of Affirmation of who God is

Testimony: Have a lady share of God's strength in the midst of life's challenges

Vocal Solo: "You Raise Me Up" from CD by Josh Gorban

Message: "Be Strong"

Responsive Scripture:

Leader: In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God. He heard my voice out of His temple and my cry came before him, even into His ears.
Psalm 18:6

Men: I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears.
Psalm 34:4



Women: Wait on the Lord; be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say on the Lord. Psalm 27:14

All: The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace. Psalm 29:11

Leader: Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, He also is my salvation.
Isaiah 12:2

Men: He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Isaiah 40:29

Women: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.
Isaiah 40:31

All: And the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.
1 Peter 5:10

Be Strong

Promotion Sunday Sermon

Linda Bradbury, Southern Territory, U.S.A.

Habakkuk Chapter's 1-3

Have you ever tried asking someone in a book store or at a magazine rack what a bible character means to them? You won't believe the look on their faces. I have tried that a couple of times, when I've been thinking about or preparing for a sermon. I asked a young man at a gas station one day, "what does the word Habakkuk mean to you?" He shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, looked at me strange and said: "It sounds like a horror movie." An elderly gentleman replied when I asked him, "I think it must be an incurable disease."

A woman in the supermarket said, "Mm, I don't know but it sounds like a fish. I've had a haddock sandwich, a halibut sandwich but I've never had a Habakkuk sandwich."

Habakkuk is a writer in the Old Testament. His book is between Nahum and Zephaniah. His name means afflicted with doubt. His writings reveal he has a great burden on his heart for his country Judah. It was written during a time when the people were living in rebellion against God's laws. They were living as if there were no God.

And worse than that, it looked to Habakkuk as if at times God was not concerned about what was happening. He lived during a great national crisis. When the country was filled with violence, hatred and political corruption everything that was right side up was now upside down. Does that sound familiar? We



all stay connected to the news. Many times in the past 5 or so years I have asked myself in frustration, why does it seem like God is not present in all that's going on. Why doesn't he do something?

Our own country has shifted far from its Christian base. And it is worrisome. Evil is on the increase, abuse of little children is rampant, there is violence, murder, suicide, gambling and political corruption. The war in Iraq is still in our faces.

There is ongoing trouble in the Middle East. AIDS in Africa. People continue to die in the millions from starvation in Afghanistan. At the top of the list these days is Human Trafficking, an illegal movement across international borders for the purpose of exploitation in the form of commercial sex or domestic labour. Trafficking is a huge and complex problem fueled by the fact that it is a huge money maker. Women and children are known to

be sold over and over again and forced into commercial sex or slave labour. More money is made by the sexual trafficking of women and girls than by any other illegal trade in the world. This problem is on the rise everywhere and now right here in our own country. This is a time for the people of God to be fortified and strengthened as never before by the power of God to face the powers of evil. Why does it happen? I imagine you have all wrestled with the same question from time to time: We ask ourselves over and over again:

Why is there so much evil in our world? Thoughts and questions like these are not new.



The prophet Habakkuk wanted so desperately for God to do something about the evil of his day. He couldn't understand why God seemed so silent. This book was written in His name to the Jewish people living in Southern Israel. All kinds of things were happening in this nation that had started out honoring God.

Habakkuk demonstrated in his short book that those who trust in God can and do ask questions. In so doing they move from fear to faith and on to a strong lasting robust faith.

At the time of the Tsunami in South East Asia even the Archbishop of Canterbury voiced his vexing questions about the problem of suffering when joy seems absent and life itself seems to be played out in a minor key for so many people of the world.

Looking at the Crisis

Here in this letter, Habakkuk speaks our language to God. He gives voice to our bewilderment, he articulates our puzzled attempts to make sense of things that are happening in our world today. We have all had days in our lives when we, like Habakkuk, have repeated his sentiments: "God, you don't seem to make sense. Why is all this happening? Where are you in all of this? Why do we not see you at work?"

In verses 1-5 Habakkuk is asking God serious questions that are not being answered. He is attempting to analyze and try to process this crisis. Each of us faces problems and storms. Habakkuk is full of uncertainty and doubt. Long before He provided Habakkuk with answers He prompted him with questions. God welcomes our questions.

That's alright because He is not offended by our uncertainty and doubt nor our questions.

He welcomes them because he knows how dependent we are on Him. He knows that questions lead us to Himself.

Remember the story in the New Testament, Mark Chapter 9: 14-24 where Jesus cast an evil spirit out of a small boy! The father of the boy said to Jesus, "I believe you can", "but I'm not sure you can do this". Jesus accepted the father's doubting and later helped put it all together until the father could say: "Lord I believe, help me overcome my unbelief."

Here are Habakkuk's questions.

Does it seem like God is indifferent to our challenges? (Verses 1-5)

Remember what he said; "How long must I call out for help? But you do not listen..." have you ever been there? How long must I

cry myself to sleep, how long must I shout at the top of my lungs? If I whisper will you listen better?

Habakkuk was facing what everyone of us faces from time to time when asking serious questions of God. Sometimes it feels as if our prayers hit a concrete wall. Have you been there? Where you call out and say; how long must I call. For Habakkuk, it wasn't so much a case of whether God will answer, but rather when he will answer? He has not lost his hope in God but some serious questions were emerging about God's apparent indifference to the things that he was asking for. Habakkuk has already worked out what God should do, he was not leaving that to God ... but why was God not doing it?

Habakkuk's next question is:

Why does God seem so inactive when He is most needed? (Verses 12-17)

O Lord how long must I cry out VIOLENCE but you do not come to do anything about it? With the courage of a prophet, Habakkuk starts to blame God.

Habakkuk's problem wasn't that God was being too harsh it was His kindness that was getting to him. He couldn't understand why God was holding back. His country was heading for disaster and God appeared to be content to just stand by. He was asking God to act as He had acted 1000 years before.

The Nation of Israel had moved away beyond what God tolerated in the past. Idol worship had become entrenched in the Nation. Child sacrifice was common. The written Word of God had been destroyed, burned in a bonfire by the King who had treated God as a joke.



Why in those circumstances did God hold back his discipline?

After all His own word says 'He disciplines those whom He loves.' In the past, as Biblical History records, when people started worshipping their own gods or generally moving away from God's ideal ... God would intervene. They would lose a war, sickness would result ... people would die ... something would happen that would bring the Nation to its knees and back to God in the process. Now God appeared to be acting out of character.

Maybe you can identify with this ... you cannot understand why God is not doing this or that. For example I'm sure that leading up to the war in Iraq there were many organized prayer meetings, prayer vigils, prayer emails, days of prayer, prayer retreats all focused on a peaceful solution, that the weapons of mass destruction would be exposed and handed over, that the regime would either give up or move out. There has been a lot of bloodshed, and heartbreak at the loss of loved ones. Does that mean God is either indifferent or inactive? Did that mean people would pray more or less?

Or continue to pray more urgently than ever for peace? We don't know why there are no answers.

What we do know is that God's Sovereign will is worked through the crisis of life. The Bible tells us that God never sleeps or slumbers. He misses nothing. He hears everything. He is working on our behalf. We are in His hands.

What is the crisis you are in right now. Can you see a way through it?



record them and write them down and by so doing you will build your faith step by step. Don't stop searching for answers from God, search with all your heart. The Bible promises you will find Him. Ask Him your most difficult questions and see how He chooses to answer. Dear friends He gives each one of us what we need, when we need it.

Habakkuk was in the middle of a crisis and he needed to see his way out of it. Without even knowing it he had taken the first step by asking God who sits above all our crisis to give him a radar report. Tell Him the range and intensity of the crisis you are in, let Him know its duration and speculate what the damage might be.

He asks God to put his doubts and fears into context, to give him some answers as to God's indifference, inaction and tolerance over the events and circumstances that he believed were wrong. He exercised his faith by asking.

We have a right to ask questions in the crisis of life and quite often in asking the questions we find our answers. More answers will be known in the future. Right now I believe that the place that God wants us to start with is with our questions. To take questions that are hard to express and put them, not as much to other people, as to God.

If you find yourself in the middle of a crisis, describe the crisis fully and ask Him to answer whatever questions you might have. Then over the next days or weeks as you get answers

God never waits too long. He is never late nor does He lose control. He makes no misjudgments or mistakes. Next time you are in that ceaseless tunnel and there seems to be no light to lead you on, remember that God is too good to be unkind, too wise to be confused, and where we cannot trace His hand, we can always trust his heart.

At the end of his short letter Habakkuk wrote:
Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour. The sovereign LORD is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of the deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

Habakkuk 3: 17-19

The writer of Psalm 13 said: I will sing to the Lord for he has been good to me.

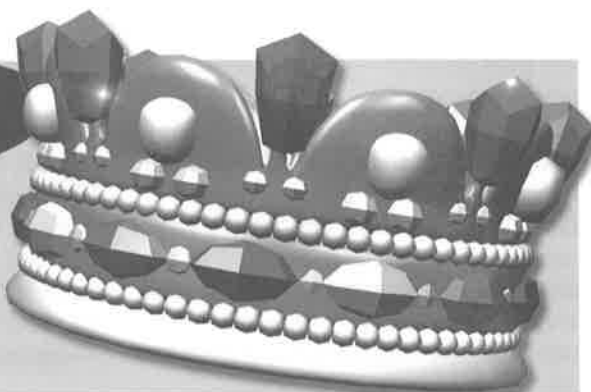
I hope you have learned the joy of singing when God delays, for as Henry Gariepy reminds us in his book HE GIVES SONGS IN THE NIGHT TO MAKE US STRONG.

Bible Study:

Esther

A Woman of Strength

Wendy Swan, Winnipeg, MB
(Copyright material – Feb 2005)



Most of our days begin rather predictably. Day after day we could enter into our diary the same three words “no big deal”. Yet throughout Scripture and history, the consistent truth emerges that women have a sphere of influence — for either good or bad. Each of us

**Esther rises to
the challenge to
be a woman who
makes a difference**

face situations in which our actions can mean the difference between a tragic or miraculous outcome. We are all called to be ‘high-impact

women’ — who dynamically affect others with our character, courage, control and confidence for ‘such a time as this’ (*Esther 4:14*).



The life of Esther testifies in a striking way to the fact that the absence of the miraculous doesn’t mean the absence of God. She challenges us to live a faithful life in an unfaithful culture. The need for caring, proactive women in our country and world has never been greater. Diana Booher contends “God’s provision for others is not in care packages that fall from the sky but in the hands and hearts of believers. When God provides those opportunities — it’s our privilege to be the delivery gals”. When faced with an unprecedented crisis, Esther rises to the challenge to be a woman who makes a difference. How does she do this? It begins long before being catapulted into the palace of the Persian empire.

She is first and foremost a woman who mirrors godly character — perhaps her (and our) greatest strength.

Esther exhibits a grace-filled charm and elegance. (2:9)

Esther knows the secret that circumstances need not define character but rather strong character can influence circumstances. The season of being set apart in the palace is far more than a prolonged beauty treatment. It's also a time of a season of purification and preparation for what is coming next. God knows what it will take for us to be spiritually ready for what is ahead. And while we

Learn to keep confidences — come to be known as a woman who can keep a secret!

may not always see being set apart as a good thing, let alone the 'best place' for us, don't fight it. Embrace it so you'll be rich in character when the King calls. When we're set apart, we're sanctified women, consecrated and made holy for His purpose and pleasure. When the difficulties come, we're able to exhibit grace-filled charm and elegance.

Discussion questions:

Esther is a young, orphaned, single new immigrant in a strange country. When have you ever felt 'left out' or had a sense of not be-

longing? How might this shape your thinking and/or commitment to God?

Esther exhibits unusual restraint and control. (2:10)

Esther actively chooses to tell no one that she is Jewish. Why? Because that's what her uncle Mordecai instructs her to do. Do you think that was easy? Her ability to restrain herself only heightens the mystery surrounding her — especially her verbal restraint in the ha-



rem. She is a woman who knows much more than she ever tells. Learn to keep confidences — come to be known as a woman who can keep a secret!

Discussion questions:

How easy is it to accept wise advice when it would seem to go against 'common sense'? Are you known as a woman who can keep a confidence?

Esther sustains a continually teachable spirit (2:10,20)

Even being a finalist in a crazy competition for the king's heart and bed did not cause Esther to flaunt her independence. She is still willing to listen and learn from Mordecai. You and I may be able to stand before a large group and speak or be distinguished in public service or be well-traveled and move in executive circles. There's nothing wrong in that — BUT has that changed your teachability — do you see yourself as the ultimate expert or has it made you realize how much you really don't know?



Esther ... knew what she believed and she knew God's hand was on her life.

Discussion questions:

Do I have a teachable spirit? Am I known as a 'talker' or a 'listener'?

Esther exhibits an unselfish modesty and authenticity (2:12-15)

Think of it — no job, no cooking, no cleaning, no washing/ironing or budget watching! Pampered and indulged. Yet Esther doesn't give in to the temptations around her — the superficiality, the selfishness, the seduction, the self-centeredness. Each woman around her was determined to be exactly what the king wanted — even if it wasn't who she really was. All except Esther. She chooses to listen to the chamberlain and ask his advice — he who knew the king the best. We're reminded to

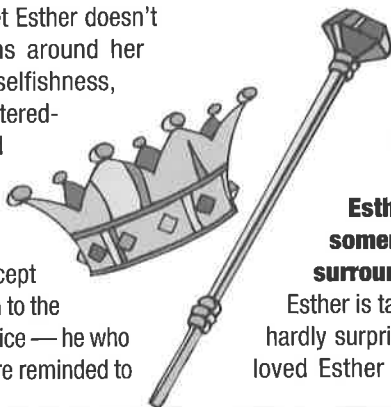
be 'glory-diggers' not 'gold-diggers'. Esther was real — no pretense. She went to the king without fear because she had no driving ambition to be queen. She had her stuff together — she knew what she believed and she knew God's hand was on her life.

Discussion questions:

How easily am I molded by those around me? How real am I before God and others?

Esther models a kind winsomeness, regardless of her surroundings (2:15-17)

Esther is taken to the king and we're hardly surprised to learn that the king loved Esther more than all the other



women. Yet no amount of royal language can disguise the risks inherent to her new role as queen as we read of the ominous allusion to the fate of Vashti, her predecessor.

Discussion questions:

When the pressure is 'on', do I exhibit a winsomeness that is consistent with easier days?

She displays a humble respect for authority (2:18-20)

Even as queen, Esther respects and values Mordecai's wisdom and counsel. She was strong enough to recognize that it was God's favour and not her own that brought her to the royal court 'for such a time as this'. Favour ... it can easily be confused with popularity. Our response to opportunities determines whether we are able to have an 'Esther effect' or not. If God's favour is resting on you, it's not about you — He wants to use you to advance His kingdom!

Discussion questions:

How do I respond to new opportunities?

Passive — with fear or self-conscious in-

securities or confident but humble, content in who I am and whose I am?

Prideful — the 'It's all about me' headspace. "I wouldn't have gotten here if I weren't so...(smart, pretty, talented...etc.)

Responsible — 'To whom much is given, much is required' (Luke 12:48)

Some Royal Advice

- Never underestimate the potential of one encounter.
- Seek the heart of the king, not the splendour of the kingdom.
- If you learn what the king favours, you can become a favourite.
- The deeper you go into the palace, the fewer the people.
- You are chosen for potential but kept because of passion.

Royal Resources

Booher, Diana. The Esther Effect: The Seven Secrets of Confidence and Influence (W. Publishing Group, Nashville), 2001.

Glaser, Connie & Smalley, Barbara. What Queen Esther Knew — Business Strategies from a Biblical Sage. (St. Martins Press), 2003.

Stedman, Ray. The Queen and I — Studies in Esther. (Word Books, Waco), 1977.



Plan an evening with coffee and dessert for the purpose of encouraging your leaders. This is a great way to build strong leadership for your group.

Discover a healthy understanding of yourself

A simple definition of a leader is a person who empowers others through relational experiences. A leader also eagerly passes on positive lessons of life that will increase growth in others, and so leaves a legacy.

One of the struggles that hinders a leader is a lack of self identity causing insecurity. To be an effective leader who will rejoice in the success of others, one must develop a strong sense of security and self-understanding.

Many of us have personal insecurities. Sometimes we face challenges which leave us questioning "Why me? Do I have what it takes?" Such moments frequently occur in life when we feel we are not adequate, when we compare ourselves with others and ignore our own God-given uniqueness.

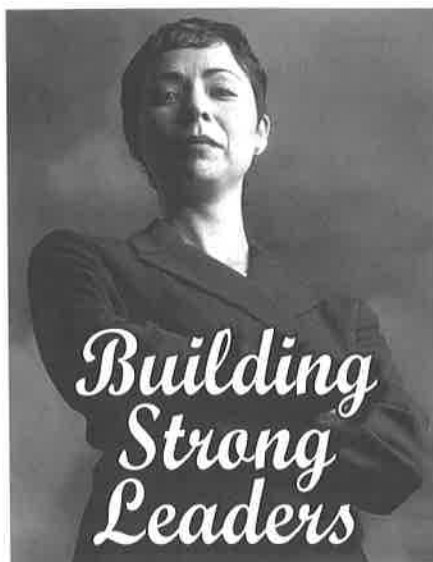
Insecurities drive us to perform to gain approval, thus we create a judgmental attitude towards ourselves and others. This results in self-pity, self-conceit and an unhealthy interdependence.

Four keys to security

Identity: Tie your self-worth to your identity in Christ, not people or performance.

Purpose: Discover and practice your God-given purpose in life, not someone else's.

Just as Jesus was sent with a specific mission to accomplish, so we are sent to accomplish a specific purpose in life. Whatever God calls you to do, he has gifted you with natural talents and strengths to accomplish the task.



Brokenness: Allow God to break you of all self-sufficiency.

We all want the grace and blessings of God in our lives. God gives grace to the humble. People often equate independence with maturity. It is a false concept and goes against the grain of interdependency, God's design.

Giving and Receiving: Learn to let others love and bless you as you do them.

What can I do to develop a healthy self-understanding and security?

- Study and meditate on Scriptures that define your identity in Christ.
- Check yourself each time you compare yourself with someone else. Pause and thank God for the differences that He has given you.
- Focus your attention on your strengths. What will you do to develop them?
- Read and listen to motivational material and resources.
- Identify the two or three most common lies

you believe about yourself. Write down the truth about them, and then tell yourself the truth out loud!

- Find someone who is 'safe' to be a support person. Practice giving and receiving the love, encouragement and truth you both need.
- Remind yourself of the truth. We are to imitate Christ — who came and emptied himself in order to serve others, not to be served.

Winning the Race

In the last decade, the atmosphere has changed in our world. We expect the greatest revival and with that will come the greatest level of warfare. Due to this, many leaders will be at risk of not fulfilling their God given calling.



A leader asked his mentor one day, "What should I do to stay healthy in the ministry?" He replied, "You need to ruthlessly eliminate 'hurry' from your life, because more than anything busyness will burn you out." The leader asked, "What else?" To which the mentor replied, "You need to ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life, there is nothing else."

Busyness is a betrayal of your calling and purpose, although it has become a status symbol in our society. If we are busy we are important. If we are not busy we are embarrassed to admit it.

Busyness is where people today are getting their security and sense of approval.

Rushing diminishes our capacity to love others and build our relationship with God. He cannot build His depth into people who are always on the move. As leaders we need to recognise that our private victories are far more valuable to God than our public ones.

How to finish the race strong and healthy

Begin a war you expect to win:

Daniel 1:8 "But Daniel purposed in his heart ..." (NKJ)

Make a decision, be determined and keep focused. Don't allow the opinions of others to distract you.

Make sure you are accountable:

Ecclesiastes 4:8-10 "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up."

Become a leader who not only has authority, but comes under authority. Find someone who you can submit to. Someone who can guide and direct you. Someone who believes in you 100%.

Eliminate the extra things:

Remove things that will distract you and throw you off course, e.g. negative company, busyness, feeding the mind with wrong thoughts through TV, media etc. Failing to remove these obstacles invites defeat.

- Finish in personal health
- Finish with character intact
- Finish with spiritual vitality

Find an accountability partner who is not afraid to ask the difficult questions:

- Could any of your relationships be seen as compromising?
- Have any of your financial dealings lacked integrity?
- Have you exposed yourself to any porno-

graphic material?

- Have you spent adequate time in Bible study and personal prayer?
- Have you given priority and quality time to your family?

Godly Attraction

A great need exists for women of God with contagious, attractive spirits to create role models for generations in the 21st century.

Godly attraction is about the content of our heart and what flows from it. Essential ingredients to becoming a Godly attraction are:

Authenticity

Transparency, being real with yourself and taking off the masks.

NLT Psalm 51:6 *"But you desire honesty (transparency) from the heart, so you can teach me to be wise in my inmost being."*

After going through a major crisis in life, our belief system may need a complete revamp. We can go through a period where we are living in a state of denial, trying to impress others and striving to gain acceptance. God can step in and show us that the greatest strengths of our lives are born from the most painful experiences. These are the times to take the mask off, be vulnerable and allow God to be God. Generations in the 21st century are looking for reality and authenticity. Women of God who have walked the talk and can guide and direct them through the storms of life are needed.

A courageous spirit

Having courage in the midst of fear, staying true to what you believe and being compelled to make a difference.

A courageous spirit enables a person to step

out and activate the vision within. One common denominator of courageous women is their faith and confidence in God in the midst of fear. Such people have learned patience, perseverance and a determination to win. A person of inner strength compelled to make a difference in life will become a champion.

Credibility

Who I am, gaining respect.

Credibility is something we cannot demand. It is something we earn and is contained in the eye of the beholder; the neighbour who watches you day-by-day, family, friends and work colleagues. Here is a quick checklist:

- Do you walk the talk?
- Are you trustworthy and reliable?
- How is your attitude affecting others?
- Is your home a place where people feel welcome?
- When in conversation with others, do you create heaviness or are you pleasant to be around?

God reliant

A friend of God.

Moses would not move on without the tangible presence of God. Walking close to God enables us to hear His voice. Constant activity with God as our friend empowers us to keep moving forward. Keeping soaked in the presence of God will bring an attractiveness.



It is time to deal with the unhealthy seeds that have been sown in our lives. Divine attraction is a result of the heart. Be who God designed you to be, and move forward.

'Women in Leadership' is a regular feature running in 'JOY' magazine and is used here with permission from Sue MacDonald of 'People Developers'.



A mid-week or Home League meeting

Focus Centres:

Set up display tables of ideas of how to stay strong:

- Healthy eating tips
- Exercise ideas
- Resources for a healthy spiritual life

Table Centre: exercise supplies, running shoes, water bottle, variety of healthy foods, a Bible, devotional books, suggestions for a healthy prayer life.

Introduction: To live strong requires courage, strength and hope in the midst of life's challenges. To be strong in body requires that we focus on healthy eating, proper rest and incorporating exercise into our daily routine. When we invest time and energy into this process we see the results of a balanced life. The challenge is to find a balance so that we not only start off strong, but 'finish strong'. Spiritually, we must recognize that ... the Sovereign Lord is our strength (Habakkuk 3: 19) so that we can FINISH STRONG in our faith. A good start is NOT enough. What matters most is how we finish.

Song: SASB 679/Tune 481

"Be strong in the grace of the Lord"

Prayer: Use this time to focus on family members or friends who are struggling in their walk of faith.

Song: SASB 596/Tune 183

"Jesus, my strength, my hope"

Scripture: Psalm 29: 1-11

Exercises to do around the house

The only exercise some folks get is jumping to conclusions, running down their friends, side-stepping responsibility and pushing their luck!

- When you are doing the dishes, take your shoes off and stand on the outer edges only with feet curled outward. Then stand with toes turned up as far as they'll go.
- After sewing for a long time, do the shoulder shrug. Pull your shoulders up to ear level, then press them down; then lift your head and stretch your neck. Repeat a few times.
- When you reach for something stored on a top shelf, put your whole body into the stretch: pull your stomach in, tuck in the seat, and stretch way up on your toes.

- When ironing, take a break and stand on one leg; bend the other leg at the knee, then raise up on your toes several times. Change legs and repeat.
- When picking up toys or something light from the floor, make a motion like a toe-touching exercise, bend from the waist and keep your knees straight. When you are picking up something heavy, do a deep-knee bend and let your legs do the lifting.
- Carry a light laundry load or anything light and unbreakable upstairs, by balancing it on your head. Keep your back straight, head erect, hips tucked under.
- When making beds, bend forward from the waist and keep your back straight when stretching over the bed to smooth the corners: stretch as far as you can reach before changing your position. When you bend, bend from the waist, with back, shoulders and knees straight.
- When planting or weeding, alternate deep-knee bends with bending from the waist. Take advantage of the outdoor air and take deep slow breaths.

(Adapted from "Exercise and Your Figure", Dell Pub. Co., Inc)

Chorus: They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength

Devotional: "Finishing Strong"

Have you ever noticed in life that a good start isn't always enough. There is nothing wrong with a good start, but it is often not enough to get us to the finish line, or to the winners circle.

We have all experienced the reality of this truth in our everyday lives. Perhaps, we start out really well on a new diet or exercise program ... Or on a project around the house, taking a class in school, a job in church or in paying off some bills ... But time passes and the diet ends, the exercise stops, we fail the class, the job doesn't get done and the bills are still where we left them. There is nothing wrong with a good start — it just isn't enough.



Poetry: Strong Women vs Women of Strength

*A strong woman works out every day to keep her body in shape ...
but a woman of strength kneels in prayer to keep her soul in shape...
A strong woman isn't afraid of anything...
but a woman of strength shows courage in the midst of her fear...
A strong woman won't let anyone get the best of her ...
but a woman of strength gives the best of herself to everyone...
A strong woman makes mistakes and avoids the same in the future...
A woman of strength realizes life's mistakes can also be God's blessings and capitalizes on them...
A strong woman walks sure footedly ...
but a woman of strength knows God will catch her when she falls...
A strong woman wears the look of confidence on her face...
but a woman of strength wears grace...
A strong woman has faith that she is strong enough for the journey ...
but a woman of strength has faith that it is in the journey that she will become strong...*

Our intentions are good, but somehow we just fail to complete the task.

Starting is not enough. Ecclesiastes 7:8 states "The end of a matter is better than its beginning." This is most true in our spiritual race. We need to finish strong, yet so many fail to do so. We must prepare to run this race in a way that allows us to finish victoriously.

Hebrews 12:1-3 helps us understand how we can keep our eyes on the finish line. Know that there are others who have successfully completed this race of life and faith. (v. 1a)

We all need the encouragement of others who have been faithful in their race. Some have gone before us and are with the Lord, others are in our midst and speak into our lives by their example.

- The great heroes of the faith in the Bible. (Moses, Paul, David) weren't perfect but they followed the Lord to the end of their lives.
- There are the heroes of the faith in your own life. (Ask people to share about someone from their own experience who has impacted their lives. Perhaps there are people the group that you can be identified as heroes of the faith.)

Get ready to run an effective, lifelong faith-race (v. 1b) We must realize that the race of faith is not a 30 second sprint. It is a life long race that requires perseverance and endurance. Perseverance and endurance mean that even when you don't feel you can go on, you keep going on anyway.

- Get rid of anything that will distract you from running the race effectively. Distractions are not necessarily bad. We may be very busy with things at the church, but as a result, our personal relationship with Christ suffers. "Everything that hinders" is not necessarily a sinful act but rather anything that gets

in the way of our spiritual growth.

- Avoid getting tangled in a web of sin. We are not immune to sin because we are Christians. There is no doubt that sin is in the church and as a result, many fail to finish this race. It is impossible to run in God's race of faith when you are burdened down by personal sin.
- The course of this race is marked out for us through the WORD OF GOD. If we fail to spend time in the Scripture, we will miss the course that God has clearly shown us through His word. You can't run a race if you don't know where you are going.

Keep your focus on Jesus, not upon yourself. (vv. 2-3) To be an effective participant in this race, we must keep our eyes on Jesus. We must stop thinking about ourselves, and consider what Jesus is leading us to be and do in this life. Even when life is hard and we face great trials or hurts or disappointments... that is the time when Christ must be our focus. By fixing our eyes on Jesus, we are actually keeping our eyes on the finish line. Jesus focused on the finish line, despite the challenges he faced. We can do no less. Where is your focus today?

Consider Him ... When we take Jesus into consideration, we realize that we too can run this race. We can walk in his footsteps and thus be motivated to run to win in the way Jesus did and the way those in the crowd of witnesses ran to win. We know it won't be easy, Jesus faced and overcame opposition just the way we have to. Stay strong ... do not give up ... finish the race! (v. 3b) If you follow Jesus, the world will be against you. Always remember, this is just a temporary stop on the way to real life!

Closing Song: S/B 9/Tune 228 -
"Jehovah is our strength"